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THE CHRISTIAN CREED

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THE
CHRISTIAN CREED
ITS ORIGIN AND SIGNIFICATION

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THERE are many students of Theosophy who have been, and indeed still are, earnest Christians, and though their faith has gradually broadened out into unorthodoxy they have retained a strong affection for the forms and ceremonials of the religion into which they were born. It is a pleasure to them to hear the recitation of the old formulæ, though they try to read into them a higher and wider meaning than the ordinary orthodox interpretation.

I have thought that it might be of interest to such students to have some slight account of the real meaning and origin of those very remarkable basic formulæ of the Church which are called the Creeds, so that when they hear them or join in their recitation the ideas brought into their minds thereby may be the grander and nobler ones originally connected with them rather than the misleading materialism of modern misapprehension.

I have spoken of the ideas originally connected with them ; I ought perhaps rather to say the ideas connected with the ancient formula upon which all the most valuable portion of them is based. For I do not

mean to say for a moment that any large number of the members, or even of the leaders, of the Church which now recites these Creeds have for many a century known their true meaning. I do not even claim that the ecclesiastical councils which edited and authorized them ever realized the full and glorious signification of the rolling phrases which they used ; for much of the true meaning had already been lost, much of the materializing corruption had been introduced long before those unfortunate assemblies were convoked.

But this at least does seem certain—that narrowed, degraded and materialized as the Christian faith has been, corrupt almost beyond recognition as its scriptures have become, an attempt has at least been made by some of the higher powers to guide those who have compiled for it these great symbols called the Creeds, so that whatever they may themselves have known, their language still clearly conveys the grand truths of the ancient wisdom to all who have ears to hear ; and much that in these formulæ seems false and incomprehensible when the endeavour is made to read them in accordance with modern misconceptions, becomes at once luminous and full of meaning when understood in that inner sense which exalts it from a fragment of unreliable biography into a declaration of eternal truth.

It is with the elucidation of this inner sense of the Creeds, then, that I am concerned ; and although in writing of this it will be necessary for me to make some

reference to their real history, I need hardly say that I am not in any way attempting to approach the subject from the ordinary scholarly standpoint. Such information as I have to give about the Creeds is obtained neither from the comparison of ancient manuscripts nor from the study of the voluminous works of theological writers, but is simply the result of an investigation into the âkâshic records made by a few students of occultism. Their notice was incidentally attracted to the question while following up quite another line of research, and it was then seen that the matter was of sufficient interest to repay further and more detailed examination.

As I am writing in the main for students of Theosophy, I shall feel myself at liberty to use without detailed explanation the ordinary Theosophical terms with which I may safely assume them to be familiar, since otherwise my little book would far exceed its allotted limits. Should it, however, fall into the hands of any to whom the occasional use of such terms constitutes a difficulty, I can only apologize to them and refer them for these preliminary explanations to any elementary Theosophical work, such as Mrs. Besant's *Ancient Wisdom* or *Man and his Bodies*.

Before describing the true origin of the Creeds of the Church, it may be well just to epitomize the current ideas of orthodox writers as to their date and history. The Christian Church has three of these formulations of belief, called respectively the Apostles', the Nicene

and the Athanasian. At one time the ecclesiastical theory was that the second and third were merely amplifications of the first, but it is now universally recognized that the Nicene Creed is historically the oldest of the three. Let us take them one by one, and explain very briefly what is commonly known of them.

Some sort of brief and simple Creed seems to have been in use from a very early period, not only as a symbol of faith, but as a pass-word in military style. But the wording of this formula appears to have varied considerably in different countries, and it was not until centuries later that anything like uniformity was attained. An example of the earlier form is the Creed given by Irenæus in his work *Against Heresies*: "I believe in One God almighty, of whom are all things . . . and in the Son of God, by whom are all things".

The earliest mention of a Creed bearing the name of the Apostles occurs in the fourth century in the writings of Rufinus, who states that it is so called because it consists of twelve articles, one of which was contributed by each of the twelve Apostles assembled in solemn conclave for the purpose. But Rufinus is not regarded as any great historical authority, and even in the Roman Catholic encyclopædia of Wetzer and Welte his story is considered as a mere pious legend.

The Apostles' Creed is not found in anything like its present form till fully four centuries after the composition of the Nicene symbol, and the most authoritative writers on the subject suppose it to be a mere conglom-

merate slowly formed by the gradual collation of earlier and simpler expressions of belief. Occult investigation negatives this idea, as will be explained later, and, though quite admitting its composite character, assigns to part of it at any rate a far higher origin than even that claimed by Rufinus.

Much more definite and satisfactory, from the ordinary point of view, is the history of the longer formula called the Nicene Creed, which appears in the mass of the Roman Church and the communion service of the Church of England. Practically all writers seem agreed that with the exception of two notable omissions it was drawn up at the Council of Nicæa in the year 325. As most readers will be aware, that council was summoned in order to settle the controversies then raging among ecclesiastical authorities as to the exact nature of Christ. The Athanasian or materialistic party declared him to be of the same substance as the Father, while the followers of Arius preferred not to commit themselves to anything stronger than the statement that he was of *like* substance, nor were they willing to admit that he also was without beginning.

The point seems a small one to have caused so much excitement and ill-feeling ; but it appears to be one of the characteristics of theological controversy that the smaller the difference of opinion the more acrimonious is the hatred between the disputants. Suggestions have been made that Constantine himself exercised a somewhat undue influence over the deliberations of the

council ; however that may have been, its decision was in favour of the Athanasian party, and the Nicene Creed was accepted as the expression of the faith of the majority. As then drawn up, it ended (if we omit the awful anathema, which shows very clearly the real spirit of the council) with the words, " I believe in the Holy Ghost," and the clauses with which it now concludes were added at the Council of Constantinople in the year 381, with the exception of the words " and the Son," which were inserted by the Western Church at the Council of Toledo in the year 589.

It was nominally on this doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son as well as from the Father that there occurred the greatest schism which has yet rent the Christian Church—the division between the Eastern and Western (or as we now call them, the Greek and the Roman) Churches, which took place in the eleventh century. It is, however, probable that this question was merely a pretext, as the progressive centralization of the Western Church under the see of Rome was becoming exceedingly inconvenient to the Oriental patriarchs, and strained relations had been existing for some time ; while the final determining cause of the secession seems to have been the transfer of their allegiance by the Bulgarians from the patriarchs to the popes. Still its use even as a pretext in so important an event in Church history has invested this " filioque " clause with an interest which is perhaps greater than its intrinsic importance would warrant.

The Athanasian Creed is admittedly a much later production than the others. Of course every one is aware that it is not in any way connected with Athanasius, and bears his name only because its compilers wished it to be considered as an expression of the doctrines which he had so stoutly upheld centuries before. Part of it at any rate has been attributed to Hilary, Bishop of Arles, and part also appears in the Profession of Denebert, though it is noticeable that in all these earlier fragments what are called the damnatory clauses are conspicuous by their absence. But as a Creed it was certainly unknown even at the very end of the eighth century, for at the Council of Friuli, held in 796, the need of just such an amplification of the earlier Confession of Faith was deplored, and indeed it was very probably in consequence of the discussion which then took place on the subject that the Athanasian Creed appeared in its present form. There is some evidence to show that the two parts into which it so obviously divides itself—the first dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity, the second with that of the Incarnation—existed separately some few years before, but it seems certain that they were not publicly used in the combined and amplified form earlier than the year 800.

Nevertheless, and in spite of the decision of the critics, clairvoyant examination shows that as a matter of fact both the parts were penned by the same hand in the sea-girt monastery of Lérins at a date consider-

ably prior to this, though it is certainly true that the writing was not made public.

Having thus very briefly epitomized what is generally accepted by orthodox scholars with regard to the history of the Creeds, I will now proceed to recount what was discovered in relation to them in the course of the investigations to which I have already referred.

The first point to bear in mind is that all the Creeds as we have them now are essentially composite productions, and that the only one of them which in any way represents a single original document is the latest of all—the Athanasian. I am perfectly aware that even this opening statement flies directly in the face of the ideas ordinarily received upon this subject, but I cannot help that; I am simply stating the facts as the investigators found them.

These Creeds, then, embody statements which are derived from three quite separate sources, and we shall find it of great interest to endeavour to disentangle these three elements from one another, and to assign to each of them respectively those clauses of the Creed (as we have it now) which have flowed from them. These are:—

(a) An ancient formula of cosmogenesis, resting on very high authority indeed.

(b) The rubric for the guidance of the hierophant in the Egyptian form of the Sohan or Sotâpatti initiation.

(c) The materializing tendency which mistakenly sought to interpret documents (a) and (b) as relating the biography of an individual.

Let us consider each of these sources a little more in detail.

It is not my intention here to enter at length into the extremely interesting information which clairvoyant investigation has given to us with regard to the true life-story of the great teacher Christ. That will be a work to be done hereafter, but it will assuredly not be undertaken unless and until it is possible for us to adduce in support of our statements evidence entirely apart from that of clairvoyance—evidence such as will appeal to the minds of the scholar and the antiquarian. It will, however, be necessary for a comprehension of the purpose of the ancient formula above mentioned that just a few words upon that subject should be introduced into this treatise.

As a matter of fact the Christ arose (at a date considerably earlier than that usually assigned to him) as a teacher within the bosom of the Essene community, living amongst them and instructing them for some time before his public ministry commenced. The heads of this community were already in possession of fragments of more or less accurate information—possibly obtained from Buddhist sources—with regard to the origin of all things. These the Christ put together and rendered coherent, casting them for the purpose of ready memorization into the shape of a

formula of belief which may be regarded as the first source of the Christian Creed.

The original of this formula may perhaps some day be exactly translated into English; but such an undertaking would need the co-operation of several persons, and very minute care as to the niceties of meaning and choice of words. The attempt will therefore not be made here, but we shall confine ourselves to indicating those clauses of our present Creeds which were represented in this original formula, and endeavouring to make their meaning more intelligible.

The purpose for which this symbol was constructed, then, was to condense into a form easily remembered the teaching as to the origin of the cosmos which the Christ had been giving to the heads of the Essene community. Each phrase of it would recall to their minds much more than the mere words in which it was expressed; in fact, it was a mnemonic such as the Buddha used when he gave to his hearers the Four Noble Truths, and no doubt each clause was taken as a text for explanation and expansion, much in the same way as Madame Blavatsky wrote the whole of *The Secret Doctrine* upon the basis of the Stanzas of Dzyan.

In considering the second source, which we have decided to mark as (b), we have to remember that the Egyptian religion expressed itself principally through a multiplicity of forms and ceremonies, and that even

in its Mysteries the same tendency repeatedly showed itself. The highest step of these Mysteries placed a man definitely upon the Path, as we should now call it, that is to say, it corresponded with what in Buddhist terminology is called the Sotâpatti initiation. An elaborate symbolical ritual was performed in connection with this step, and part of our Creed is a direct reproduction of the instructions laid down by that ritual for the officiating hierophant, the only difference being that what there stood as a series of directions has been recast into the form of a historical narrative describing that descent of the Logos into matter which the original ritual was intended to symbolize.

This rubric of initiation, in the new form which we have described, was inserted in the formula (a) by the leaders of the Essene community shortly after Christ's departure from among them, in order that the details as to the descent of the Second Logos (which he had so often illustrated for them by reference to the ritual of this initiation) might be commemorated in the same symbol which gave the great outline of the doctrine.

Teaching similar in character and similarly illustrated by symbol was given by him with regard to the work of the First and the Third Logoi, though comparatively little of it has been preserved to us; but there seems no doubt that special importance was attached by the Christ to the accurate comprehension by his disciples of the descent into matter of the

monadic essence which is outpoured by the Second Logos.

This is readily comprehensible if we reflect that it is this monadic essence which ensouls all the forms around us, and that it is only through its study that the great principle of evolution can be grasped, and the law of love which sways the universe at all understood. For though undoubtedly evolution is also taking place in the case of the life which ensouls atoms and molecules, its progress is entirely beyond our ken; and assuredly the same may be said, at any rate as regards the vast majority of men, with reference to that far higher evolution which we must suppose to be in operation in connection with that third great outpouring which comes from the First Logos.

Thus it is evident that it is only through the study of the method of this second outpouring that a comprehension of the whole system may be approached, and this would account for the emphasis which the Christ seems to have laid upon this part of his teaching. Knowing as they did the necessity for this emphasis, it is not wonderful that those who felt themselves responsible for handing on the teaching should have incorporated this symbolical outline of it into the special formula which was intended to epitomize their faith. No doubt in doing so they were actuated by the highest and purest motives, and it was not possible for them to foresee that this very insertion would presently open the way for the degrading and destructive action

of tendency (c), of which in their time there was as yet no sign.

It may perhaps be asked why the Christ should have chosen the somewhat complicated and material symbolism of this Egyptian rite to illustrate his teaching on such a subject. We are in no position to presume to criticize the methods adopted by one who knows ; but perhaps we may venture to suggest that a possible reason may be found in the close connection of the Essenes with the Egyptian tradition, and in the fact that Jesus himself had in earlier life spent some considerable time in Egypt and passed through at least one initiation according to its methods.

(c) At a very early period in the history of the movement which afterwards became known as Christianity we find two rival schools or tendencies asserting themselves, which are in reality the outcome of two phases of the life-work of the Christ. As has been said, the greater portion of his time was devoted to giving definite instruction within the boundaries of the Essene community ; but in addition to this, and in opposition to the views of the official leaders of that community, he also passed beyond these comparatively narrow limits, and devoted a short period at the close of his life to public preaching.

It was obviously impossible for him to put before the ignorant multitude those deeper teachings of the Ancient Wisdom which he had imparted to the few who by special education and a long life of ascetic

training had fitted themselves, at least to some extent, for their reception. We find, therefore, that his public addresses may be divided into two classes, the first consisting of the *λόγια*, a series of short sentences each containing either an important truth or a rule of conduct, and the second being composed of the *παρακλητήρια* or “ words of comfort ” — those eloquent discourses which were called forth by the deep compassion he felt for the profound misery almost universal at that time among the lower classes, and the terrible atmosphere of despair, depression and degradation by which they were overwhelmed.

Some traditional fragments of the Logia have been incorporated here and there in what are now called the gospels ; and what seems to be a genuine leaf from a collection of them was recently discovered in Egypt by Messrs. Grenfell and Hunt. Christ himself appears to have written nothing, or at any rate nothing that he wrote is now known to us ; but during the first two centuries after his death (which, be it remembered, took place considerably before what we now call the Christian era) many of his disciples seem to have made and written down collections of the sayings which were ascribed to him by the current oral tradition. In such collections, however, no attempt was made to give a biography of the Christ ; though sometimes a few words of introduction described the occasion upon which certain sayings were uttered, just as in the Buddhist books we constantly find a sermon

of the Buddha's introduced by the statement, "On a certain occasion the Blessed One was dwelling in the bamboo garden at Rājagriha," etc.

Though some of his Logia have been distorted, and many sayings have been attributed to him which he certainly never uttered, yet he has been still more seriously misrepresented with reference to the "words of comfort" or *Paraklêtéria*, and with even more disastrous consequences. The general tenour of these addresses was an endeavour to inspire fresh hope in the hearts of the despairing, by explaining to them that if they followed the teaching which he put before them they would assuredly find themselves in better case in the future than in the present, and that though now they were poor and suffering they might yet so live as to ensure for themselves an existence after death and conditions of life upon their next return to earth far more desirable than the fate of those who now so cruelly oppressed them.

It was perhaps not unnatural that many of the more ignorant of his hearers should apprehend his meaning but dimly, and should go away with a general impression that he was vaguely prophesying a future in which what they considered injustice should be righted according to their wishes—in which savage retribution should overtake the rich man, mainly for the crime of being rich, while they themselves should inherit all kinds of power and glory merely because they now were poor.

It will be readily understood that this was a doctrine which easily secured the adhesion of all the least desirable elements of the community, and among such classes in the ancient world it seems to have spread with marvellous rapidity. Nor is it wonderful that such men should have altogether eliminated from their doctrine the condition of good living, and simply banded themselves together, often in orgies of the most objectionable character, as believers in "a good time coming," when they should revenge themselves upon all their personal enemies, and without effort of their own enter forthwith into possession of the wealth and luxury which had been accumulated by the labours of others.

As this tendency developed, it naturally assumed a more and more political and revolutionary character, until it came to be true of the leaders of this faction as of David of old, that "every one that was in distress, and every one that was in debt, and every one that was discontented, gathered themselves unto them." It is little wonder, therefore, that the organization which gathered round such men, filled as it was with jealous hatred of any knowledge superior to their own, should eventually come to regard ignorance as practically a qualification for salvation, and to look with uncomprehending contempt upon the Gnosis possessed by those who still retained some tradition of the real teaching of the Christ.

It must not, however, be supposed that this turbulent

and covetous majority comprised the whole of the early Christian movement. Apart from the various bodies of Gnostic philosophers who had inherited a more or less accurate tradition from authentic sources of the secret teaching given by Christ to the Essenes, there was also a steadily increasing body of comparatively quiet and respectable people who, though without any knowledge of the Gnosis, took what they knew of the Logia of Christ as their guide in life, and this body eventually became the predominant force in what was afterwards called the orthodox party.

Thus we see that in the course of the development of the Christian movement three main streams of tendency may be clearly recognized as resulting from the teaching of the Christ; first, the vast congeries of Gnostic sects which, generally speaking, represented something of the inner teaching given to the Essenes, though in many cases tinged with ideas derived from various outside sources, such as Zoroastrianism, Sabaism, etc.; second, the moderate party who at first troubled themselves little about doctrine, but adopted the reputed sayings of Christ as their rule of life; and third, the ignorant horde nicknamed "poor men," whose only real religion was a vague hope of revolution.

As Christianity gradually spread, its followers became sufficiently numerous to earn recognition as a political factor, and thus to gain a certain amount of social influence. By degrees the representatives of our

second and third tendencies gradually drew together into a party which called itself orthodox, and being united in its distrust of the higher teachings of the Gnostics, found itself compelled to develop some sort of doctrinal system to offer instead of theirs. By this time, however, the original Essene community had been broken up, and the formula (which among them had never been written, but was handed down from mouth to mouth) had in various more or less imperfect forms become practically public property among all the sects; and of course the orthodox party found itself obliged to produce an interpretation of it to set up against the true one as propounded by the Gnostics.

Then it was that there dawned upon their mental horizon one of the most colossal misunderstandings ever invented by the crass stupidity of man. It occurred to somebody—probably it had long before occurred to the densely ignorant “poor men”—that the beautiful allegorical illustration of the descent of the Second Logos into matter contained in the symbolic ritual of the Egyptian initiation was not an allegory at all, but the life-story of a physical human being whom they identified with Jesus of Nazareth. No idea could have been more degrading to the grandeur of the faith, or more misleading to the unfortunate people who accepted it, yet one can understand its welcome by the grossly ignorant, as being more nearly within the grasp of their very small mental calibre than the magnificent breadth of the true interpretation.

The slight additions necessary to engraft this unworthy theory upon the growing Creed were easily made, and not very long after this period fragmentary versions of it began to be committed to writing. So that the commonly accepted idea that the Creed was a conglomerate gradually gathered together is, though not quite in the sense usually supposed, partially true, but the tradition which assigns its authorship to the twelve apostles is entirely unworthy of credit. The true genesis of the greater part of it is indeed far higher than that, as we have seen, and the early fragments are imperfect recollections of an oral tradition, out of which eventually a very fair representation of the original was compiled, and this was formally adopted by the Council of Nicæa, though that council showed its absolute miscomprehension of the whole thing by concluding it with a curse entirely foreign to its spirit.

In order that we may have before us the exact form of Creed which was the outcome of this exceedingly turbulent council, I subjoin here a careful translation of it, given by Mr. Mead in *Lucifer*, vol. ix., p. 204.

“We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of all things both visible and invisible ; and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten of the Father, only-begotten, that is to say, of the substance of the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were

made, both things in heaven and things in earth—who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered and rose again on the third day, went up into the heavens, and is to come again to judge the quick and the dead ; and in the Holy Ghost. But those who say, ‘there was when he was not,’ and ‘before he was begotten he was not,’ and that ‘he came into existence from what was not,’ or who profess that the Son of God is of a different person or substance, or that he is created, or changeable, or variable, are anathematized by the Catholic Church.”

It will be perceived that though this form is broadly similar to that which now occurs in the communion service of the Church of England, there are yet several not unimportant points of difference. Much of the materialistic quasi-historical corruption has not yet found entrance, though even already the fatal identification of Christ with Jesus, and of both of them with the Second Logos, shows itself all too plainly. But since all accounts agree that the members of this celebrated council were in the main ignorant and turbulent fanatics, drawn together largely by the hope of promoting their personal interests, it is small wonder that the narrower rather than the wider idea commended itself to them. Still it will be noted that the confusion of the conception by the Holy Ghost and the birth from the Virgin does not appear ; the symbol of the crucifixion is not degraded into a historical fact, nor has the

clumsy attempt been made to give an air of verisimilitude to the story by importing into it an entirely inaccurate date in the shape of an unwarranted reference to that unfortunate and much-maligned man, Pontius Pilate.

All these missing clauses, however, appear in what is called "The Roman Confession," which is usually assigned to an earlier date, but we are in no way concerned in this discussion, since we recognize that most of these clauses are merely slight distortions of the Egyptian formula of initiation, which had certainly existed for many centuries.

Whatever may have been the date (and it was undoubtedly an early one) at which the degradation of allegory into pseudo-biography first took place, we see its influence working upon other documents as well as upon the Creed. The gospels also have suffered under an exactly similar materializing mania, for the beautiful parable of the original has again and again been corrupted by the addition of popular legends and the interpersions of some of the traditional Logia, until in what are now called the gospels we have a confused compilation—hopelessly impossible, if regarded as history, and exceedingly difficult to sort out into its component parts.

We must not, however, allow ourselves to be led away into the fascinating bye-path of gospel criticism, but must confine ourselves to the consideration of the Creed. Before, however, it will be possible for the reader to

appreciate fully the real meaning of its various clauses, it is necessary that he should understand as far as may be possible the outline of the system of cosmogenesis which it was originally intended to indicate. This is of course identical with that taught by the Wisdom-Religion, and the statement of it with which we are now concerned is in fact an outline of the respective functions of the Three Logoi in human evolution.

It is of course understood from the beginning that this is a subject of which none of us can hope to attain perfect comprehension for many an æon to come, for he who grasps it thoroughly must be consciously one with the Highest. Some indications may, however, be given which may perhaps help us in our thinking, though it is most emphatically necessary to bear in mind all the way through that, since we are looking at the problem from below instead of from above, from the standpoint of our extreme ignorance instead of from that of omniscience, any conception that we may form of it *must* be imperfect and therefore inaccurate.

We are told that what happens at the beginning of a solar system (such as our own) is, allowing for certain obvious differences in the surrounding conditions, identical with what happens at the re-awakening after one of the great periods of cosmic rest; and it will probably be more possible for us not entirely to misunderstand if we endeavour to direct our attention to the former rather than to the latter.

It should be realized to begin with, that in the evo-

lution of a solar system three of the highest principles of the Logos of that system correspond to and respectively fulfil the functions of the three Great Logoi in cosmic evolution ; in point of fact, those three principles are identical with the three Great Logoi in a manner which to us down here is wholly incomprehensible, even though we may see that it must be so.

Yet we should be careful, while recognizing this identity in essence, on no account to confuse the respective functions of beings differing so widely in their sphere of action. It should be remembered that from the First Logos, which stands next to the Absolute, emanates the Second or Dual Logos, from which in turn comes the Third. From that Third Logos come forth the Seven Great Logoi, called sometimes the Seven Spirits before the throne of God ; and as the divine outbreathing pours itself ever further outward and downward, from each of these we have upon the next plane seven Logoi also, together making up on that plane forty-nine.

It will be observed that we have already passed through many stages on the great downward sweep towards matter ; yet, omitting the detail of intermediate hierarchies, it is said that to each of these forty-nine belong millions of solar systems, each energized and controlled by its own solar Logos. Though, at levels so exalted as these, differences in glory and power can mean but little to us, we may yet to some extent realize how vast is the distance between the three Great

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Logoi and the Logos of a single system, and so avoid a mistake into which careless students are constantly falling.

It has often been stated that each of the planes of our system is divided into seven sub-planes, and that the matter of the highest sub-plane in each may be regarded as atomic *quâ* its particular plane—that is to say, that its atoms cannot be further subdivided without passing from that plane to the one next above it. Now these seven atomic sub-planes, taken by themselves and entirely without reference to any of the other sub-planes which are afterwards called into existence by the various combinations of their atoms, compose the lowest of the great cosmic planes, and are themselves its seven subdivisions.

So that before a solar system comes into existence we have on its future site, so to speak, nothing but the ordinary conditions of interstellar space—that is to say, we have matter of the seven subdivisions of the lowest cosmic plane (sometimes called the cosmic *prākritic*), and from our point of view this is simply the atomic matter of each of *our* sub-planes without the various combinations of which we are accustomed to think as linking them together and leading us gradually from one to the other.

Now in the evolution of a system the action of the three higher principles of its Logos (generally called the three Logoi of the system) upon this antecedent condition of affairs takes place in what we may call

a reversed order. In the course of the great work each of them pours out his influence, but the outpouring which comes first in time is from that principle of our Logos which corresponds to the manas in man, though of course on an infinitely higher plane. This is usually spoken of as the Third Logos, or Mahat, corresponding to the Holy Ghost in the Christian system—the “Spirit of God which broods over the face of the waters” of space, and so brings the worlds into existence.

The result of this first great outpouring is the quickening of that wonderful and glorious vitality which pervades all matter (inert though it may seem to our dim physical eyes), so that the atoms of the various planes develop, when electrified by it, all sorts of previously latent attractions and repulsions, and enter into combinations of all kinds, thus by degrees bringing into existence all the lower subdivisions of each level, until we have before us in full action the marvellous complexity of the forty-nine sub-planes as we see them to-day.

For this reason is it that in the Nicæan symbol the Holy Ghost is so beautifully described as “the Lord and Giver of Life”; and some clue as to the method of His working may be obtained by any one who will study carefully Sir William Crookes’ paper on “The Genesis of the Elements,” read before the Royal Institution of Great Britain on February 18th, 1887.

When matter of all the sub-planes of the system

is already in existence and the field has thus been prepared for its activity, the second great outpouring begins—the outflow of what we have sometimes called the monadic essence; and it comes this time from that higher principle corresponding in our system to the Second Logos, of whom the Christian writers speak as God the Son. Much that has been said of Him, though beautiful and true when rightly understood, has been grossly degraded and misinterpreted by those who could not grasp the grand simplicity of the truth; but to this we shall return later.

Slowly and steadily, but with resistless force, this great influence pours itself forth, each successive wave of it spending a whole manvantara in each of the kingdoms of nature—the three elemental, the mineral, the vegetable, the animal and the human. On the downward arc of its mighty curve it simply aggregates round itself the different kinds of matter on the various planes, so that all may be accustomed and adapted to act as its vehicles; but when it has reached the lowest point of its destined immeshing in matter, and turns to begin the grand upward sweep of evolution towards divinity, its object is to develop consciousness in each of these grades of matter in turn, beginning of course with the lowest.

Thus it is that man, although possessing in a more or less latent condition so many higher principles, is yet for a long time at first fully conscious in his physical body only, and afterwards very gradually becomes

so in his astral vehicle, and later still in his mind-body.

Thus also while we see in the mineral kingdom scarcely anything that we should call consciousness—nothing but the first faint beginnings of desire as shown in chemical affinity—in the vegetable kingdom we find likes and dislikes (desire, in fact) becoming very much more prominent; indeed, we have only to read any of the later works on botany to see that many plants exercise a great deal of ingenuity and sagacity in attaining their ends, limited though these ends may be.

In the animal kingdom desire occupies a very prominent place, and there can be no doubt that the astral body is definitely beginning to function, though the animal has as yet nothing that can be called consciousness in it apart from the physical vehicle. In the higher domestic animals, however, the astral body has sufficient development to be made after death into a *kâmarûpa* which persists for some days at least, or sometimes even for weeks, while a certain amount of *mânasic* activity is distinctly beginning to show itself.

When we come to the human kingdom we find that with the lower types of men desire is still emphatically the most prominent feature, though the *mânasic* development has also proceeded to some extent; during life the man has a dim consciousness in his astral vehicle while he is asleep, and after death his *kâmarûpa* is very fairly conscious and active, and endures for

many years, though as yet he has practically nothing of the devachanic life.

Coming to the ordinary cultured man of our own race, we find him showing high mental activity during life, and possessing qualities which give him the possibility of a very long devachanic existence after death. He is fully conscious in his astral body during sleep, though not usually able to carry through any memory from the one condition of existence to the other. The cases of the comparatively few men who have as yet undertaken the task of self-development along occult lines show us that the future course of evolution simply means the unfolding of consciousness on higher and higher planes as humanity passes onward and becomes fit for such development.

But long before this period the third great outpouring of divine life has taken place—that from the highest principle of the Logos of the system, corresponding to the *âtma* in man, and holding the place filled in *cosmic* evolution by the First Logos, which has been called by Christianity God the Father.

An attempt has been made to indicate how the monadic essence in its upward course gradually unfolds consciousness first in the physical plane, then in the astral, and then in the lower *mânasic*. But it is only when in the highest of the domestic animals it reaches this latter stage that the possibility of the third outpouring comes within measurable distance. For this third wave of divine life can descend of itself no

lower than our buddhic plane, and there it seems as it were to hover, waiting for the development of fit vehicles to enable it to come down one step further and be the individual souls of men. The phrase sounds strange, but it is difficult to express accurately in human words the mysteries of the higher life.

Imagine (to use an Eastern simile) the sea of monadic essence steadily pressed upward into the mânasic plane by the force of evolution inherent in it, and this third outpouring hovering above that plane like a cloud, constantly attracting and attracted by the waves below. Any one who has ever seen the formation of a water-spout in tropical seas will grasp the idea of this Oriental illustration—will understand how the downward-pointing cone of cloud from above and the upward-pointing cone of water from below draw nearer and nearer by mutual attraction, until a moment comes when they suddenly leap together, and the great column of mingled water and vapour is formed.

Similarly the blocks of animal monadic essence are constantly throwing parts of themselves into incarnation like temporary waves on the surface of the sea, and the process of differentiation goes on until at last a time comes when one of these waves rises high enough to enable the hovering cloud to effect a junction with it, and it is then drawn up into a new existence neither in the cloud nor in the sea, but between the two, and partaking of the nature of both; and so it is separated from the block of which it has hitherto

formed a part, and falls back into the sea no more. That is to say, an animal belonging to one of the more advanced blocks of essence may by his love for and devotion to his master, and by the mental effort involved in the earnest endeavour to understand him and please him, so raise himself above his original level that he becomes a fit vehicle for this third outpouring, the reception of which breaks him away from his block and starts him on his career of immortality as an individual.

If we remember that the consciousness of the monadic essence has been developed up to the lower mânasic level, and that the hovering influence of the divine life has descended to the buddhic plane, we shall be prepared to look on the higher mânasic levels, the arûpa division of the devachanic plane, for the resultant combination ; and that is truly the habitat of the causal body of man, the vehicle of the reincarnating ego.

But here we note that a curious change has taken place in the position of the monadic essence. All the way through its long line of evolution in all the previous kingdoms it has invariably been the ensouling and energizing principle, the force behind whatever forms it may have temporarily occupied. But now that which has hitherto been the ensouler becomes itself in turn the ensouled ; from that monadic essence is formed the causal body—that resplendent sphere of living light into which the still more glorious light from above descends, and by means of which it is enabled to express itself as a human individuality.

Nor should any think that it is an unworthy goal to reach as the result of so long and weary an evolution, thus to become the vehicle of this last and grandest outpouring of the divine spirit; for it must be remembered that without the preparation of this vehicle to act as a connecting link the immortal individuality of man could never come into being, and that this upper triad thus formed becomes a transcendent unity—"not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by taking of the manhood into God." So that no fragment of the work that has been done through all these ages is lost, and nothing has been useless; for without that work this final consummation could never have been reached, that man should become the equal of the Logos from whom he came forth, and that thus the very Logos Himself should be perfected, in that He has of His own offspring those equal to Himself upon whom that love which is the essence of His divine nature can for the first time be fully lavished.

Be it remembered also that it is only in the presence within him of this third outpouring of the divine life that man possesses an absolute guarantee of his immortality; for this is "the spirit of man that goeth upward" in contradistinction to "the spirit of the beast that goeth downward"—that is to say, which flows back again at the death of the animal into the block of monadic essence from which it came.

A time will come, so we are told, though to our intellect it may well seem unthinkable—the time of the

mahâpralaya—when “all things visible and invisible” will be re-absorbed into That from which they came; when even the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and all that is of their essence, must for the time sink into sleep and disappear. But even in that period of universal rest there is one Entity who remains unaffected; the First, the Unmanifested Logos rests still, as ever, in the bosom of the Infinite. And since the direct essence of this, the divine Father of all, enters into the composition of the spirit of man, by that almighty power his immortality is absolutely assured.

How beautifully, how grandly these glorious conceptions are mirrored even in what is left to us of the Christian Creeds, I shall hope to show as we consider them clause by clause.

The Apostles' and the Nicene Creeds so closely resemble one another that it will be the most convenient method for us to consider them together, taking for the present only occasional illustrations from the Athanasian, and leaving the more important clauses of the latter to be dealt with separately afterwards. It is evident that in these two shorter Creeds we have simply two different traditions of one original form—a form already including reminiscences of the documents which we have called (*a*) and (*b*), and already tinged considerably by the influence of tendency (*c*).

The date at which this original form became fairly crystallized as regards its main outlines cannot yet be fixed with certainty, but we should probably not be far

wrong in assigning it to the middle of the second century of our era—always bearing in mind that that era has nothing to do with the real time of the birth of the teacher called the Christ, and remembering also that in all likelihood no attempt was made to reduce the form to writing until a considerably later period. The two Creeds differ, as evidently the schools of thought which preserved them must have differed, the Nicene being always more metaphysical and less materialistic than the other, taking always a somewhat higher view, and therefore lending itself more readily to such an attempt to revive the original and only tenable interpretation as I wish to make.

"I believe in God the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth." So runs the opening clause of the Apostles' Creed, referring evidently to the Logos of our solar system; the Nicæan symbol, taking an even wider range, is cast into a form more applicable to the First Cause of all, and so it speaks of the *one* God, maker not only of heaven and earth, but "of all things visible and invisible." Well may the glorious title of "the Father" be given to That which is the first epiphany of the Infinite, for from Him all came, even the Second and Third Logoi themselves, and into Him one day all that came forth must return. Not to lose consciousness, be it observed, for that would be to throw away the result of all these æons of evolution; but rather to become in some way that to our finite minds is as yet unintelligible, a conscious part of that

stupendous whole—a facet of that all-embracing Consciousness which is indeed the divine Father of all, “above all, and through all, and in you all.” “Then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.”

“And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of his Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father; by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.” With the exception of the first few words the whole of this is omitted from the Apostles’ Creed, as we might perhaps expect that it would be in a form intended to apply to a somewhat less lofty level of the universe.

Here, in the insertion of the name Jesus Christ, we come upon the first trace of the materializing influence which we classified as (c), for the original formula (a) contains neither of these words. In the earliest copies written in Greek which have as yet been clairvoyantly seen by our investigators the words now rendered as $\text{IH}\Sigma\text{OYNXPI}\Sigma\text{TON}$ and translated “Jesus Christ” appear either as $\text{IHTPONAPI}\Sigma\text{TON}$, which would mean “the chiefest healer (or deliverer),” or as $\text{IEPONAPI}\Sigma\text{TON}$, which seems to mean simply “the most holy one.” It is, however, of little use for us to speak of these various readings until some explorer on the physical plane discovers a manuscript containing them, for then only will the world of scholars be

disposed to listen to the suggestions which naturally follow from them.

In any case the Greek form of the formula (*a*) is but a translation from an original given in an older tongue, so that to us as students it is more interesting to see the meaning attached to these words in the minds of those who had heard them spoken by the great Teacher than to follow out the details of their rendering into the corrupt and Hellenistic dialect of the period. Beyond all shadow of doubt that original conception refers exclusively to the Second Logos as manifesting Himself at different levels of the great descent into matter, and not in the slightest degree either to the Teacher or to any individual man at all.

The greater part of this poetic passage is an endeavour to make clear the position and functions of the Second Logos, and to guard so far as may be possible against various misconceptions of them. Great stress is laid upon the fact that naught else in the universe comes into existence in the same way as does this Second Logos, called into being as He is by the mere action of the will of the First, working without intermediary; so that the old translator spoke truly enough in intention, however unfortunate he was in his choice of an expression, when he called Him "the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, by whom all things were made;" since He is indeed the only direct manifestation of the First, the Unmanifested, and undoubtedly

"without Him was not anything made which was made;" for the monadic essence which He pours forth is the ensouling and energizing principle at the back of all organic life of which we know anything.

The true meaning of the word *μονογενής* is very clearly stated by Mr. Mead in an article in *The Theosophical Review*, vol. xxi., p. 141, in which he remarks: "There is no longer any doubt that the term invariably translated 'only-begotten' means nothing of the kind, but 'created alone,' that is to say, created from one principle and not from a syzygy or pair."

It is obvious that this title is and can be truly given only to the Second Logos, for the manner in which He is emanated from the First must evidently differ from all other and later processes of generation, which are invariably the result of interaction.

It should also be borne in mind that "before all worlds," however true it may be as a statement referring to the emanation of the Christ, is a flagrant mistranslation of *πρὸ πάντων τῶν αἰώνων*, which can signify nothing but "before all the æons." To any one who is even superficially familiar with Gnostic nomenclature this bears its meaning on its face, and tells us simply that the Second Logos is the first in time, as He is the greatest, of all the æons or emanations from the eternal Father.

Here also comes the emphatic and reiterated assertion that He is "of one substance with the Father,"

identical in every respect with Him from whom He came, save only that He has descended this one step further, and in thus becoming manifest has for the time limited the full expression of that which yet He is in essence, so that He has a dual aspect—"equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, yet inferior to the Father as touching His manhood;" and yet through all rings the triumphant proclamation that the eternal unity is still maintained, "for although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ," now as ever, "God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God."

Few grander protests against the doctrine of eternal duality—the God and the not-God—have ever been penned by mortal man; and in the later and more detailed Athanasian Creed we have the very proof of the essential unity adduced, in the statement of the power to bear back into the Highest all the fruit of the descent into matter, for we are told that He is "one, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God."

Most truly and most beautifully also is it written of Him that "for us men and for our salvation He came down from heaven;" for though indeed it is true that the immortal spirit of man is of the nature of the Father Himself, yet but for the sacrifice of the Son, who poured forth of His substance as monadic essence into all the limitations of the lower kingdoms, the causal body could never have been, and without that

as vehicle, as the vase to hold the elixir of life, heaven and earth could never have met together, nor this mortal have put on immortality. And so is the true Christ at once the creator and the saviour of man, for without Him the gap between spirit and matter could never be bridged over, and individuality could not be.

“And was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary.” Here there seems for a moment to be a difficulty, for how can the birth of the Second Logos be due in any way to the action of the Third, who Himself holds to Him the relation of child rather than of father? Yet if we follow the original lines of thought we shall not be misled by the apparent contradiction, for we shall realize that what we are dealing with is simply a further stage of the great sacrifice of the descent into matter.

The English translator, or perhaps still more his Latin predecessor, has unfortunately confused the meaning by an entirely unwarranted change in one of his prepositions—a very remarkable mistranslation, so obvious and so astonishing that it could never have escaped the notice of scholars, were it not for the mist thrown round it by the initial misconception which blinded their eyes to the possibility of any but the grossest material interpretation of the whole sentence. Even in the latest Greek form there is but one preposition for the two nouns, and the phrase runs *σαρκωθέντα ἐκ πνεύματος ἁγίου καὶ Μαρίας τῆς παρθένου*—“and was incarnate of the Holy Ghost *and* the Virgin Mary.” That

is to say, the monadic essence, having already "come down from heaven," as mentioned in the previous clause, materializes itself by assuming a garment of the visible and tangible matter already prepared for its reception by the action of the Third Logos upon what without Him would have been virgin, or unproductive, matter.

This name "virgin" has frequently been applied to the atomic matter of the various planes, because when in this condition it does not of its own motion enter into any sort of combination, and so it remains, as it were, inert and unfruitful. But no sooner is it electrified by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost than it wakens into activity, combines into molecules, and rapidly generates the matter of the lower sub-planes, thus bringing into existence out of the atomic ether what chemists call the elements; and it is of this matter, thus vivified by that first outpouring, that are composed the manifold forms which are ensouled by the monadic essence.

When this second outpouring reaches the physical plane in the shape of what we have sometimes called the mineral monad, it gives to these various chemical elements a further power of combination, and thus the way is prepared for the other and higher manifestations of life which are to follow in the later kingdoms. The Second Logos, therefore, takes form not of the "virgin" matter alone, but of matter which is already instinct and pulsating with the life of the Third Logos, so that both the life and the matter surround Him as a vesture,

and thus in very truth He is "incarnate of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary."

Here again the materializing tendency has introduced a totally different idea by a very trifling alteration—in fact, by the insertion of a single letter, for in the earliest form the name was not *Μαρία*, but *Μαία*, meaning simply mother. It would be tempting to speculate as to whether there could possibly be any traditional connection between this strangely suggestive word and the Sanskrit *Mâyā*, which is so often used to express this same illusory veil of matter which the Logos draws round Him in His descent; but all that can be said at present is that no such connection has yet been traced.

"And was made man." The insertion of this clause is exceedingly significant, since it distinctly shows that the arrival of the monadic essence at the level of humanity was a stage separate from and later than the descent into matter, and that consequently the "taking flesh of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary" previously mentioned did not and could not refer to a human birth. This clause is omitted from the Apostles' Creed, but duly appears in the draft made by the Council of Nicæa, where it is even more evidently intended to describe a later step in evolution, since the text runs "and was made flesh, and was made man," the assumption of the flesh clearly referring to the previous passage of the monadic essence through the animal kingdom. In the Apostles' Creed the influence of tendency (c) is predominant, for the whole process is

described in the most grossly materialistic manner—"who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

"Suffered under Pontius Pilate." In this clause we have quite the most remarkable instance on record of the degrading and narrowing influence of the tendency which we have called (*c*), for by the insertion of the tiniest letter of the Greek alphabet (the iota, corresponding to the "jot" spoken of in the gospel) the original meaning has been not merely obscured, but absolutely lost and forgotten. The alteration is so simple and easy to make, and yet its effects are so extraordinary and so colossal, that those who discovered it could for some time scarcely believe their eyes, and when they *had* grasped the situation, they were unable to comprehend how it had been possible so long to overlook anything so exceedingly obvious.

Instead of ΠONTIOΥΠΙΛΑΤΟΥ the earliest Greek manuscripts which the clairvoyant investigators have yet been able to find, all read ΠONTOΥΠΙΛΗΤΟΥ. Now the interchange of A and H is by no means infrequent in various Greek dialects, so that the only real alteration here is the insertion of the I, which changes πόντος, meaning a sea, into Πόντιος, which is a Roman proper name. I have no wish to suggest that this alteration, or either of the others which I have mentioned, was necessarily made with any deceitful object, or with intention to mislead; it may quite easily have been made under the impression that it was merely a

correction of the unimportant mistake of some earlier copyist.

It was obvious to the investigators that the Essene monk who first translated the formula into Greek was by no means perfectly acquainted with that tongue, and the result was consequently anything but classical. Men into whose hands the manuscript (or copies of it) came at later periods amended here and there obvious errors in spelling or construction, and it is quite possible that one who approached its consideration with a mind incapable of appreciating its true mystical signification, and filled with the anthropomorphic interpretation, might suppose that in this case, for example, a letter must have been omitted by some ignorant scribe, and so might insert that letter without the least idea that he was thereby changing the entire meaning of the clause and introducing a conception absolutely foreign to the spirit of the whole document.

No doubt in ecclesiastical history there has been a large amount of direct, unblushing forgery, done "for the greater glory of God," which in the eyes of the monks simply meant the advancement of the interests of the Church ; but we are fortunately not compelled to postulate dishonesty in this case, since we see that ignorance and prejudice may very easily have done quite innocently the fatal work of the utter materialization of conceptions originally so grand and so luminous.

It was no doubt with the same laudable, though mis-

taken idea of polishing the diction that the preposition ἐπὶ was (much later) substituted for the earlier ὑπὸ, though after the theory of the proper name was once accepted the mischief was done, and this further alteration merely put the phrase into more elegant shape, and so lessened the probability of inquiry as to any other possible meaning than the apparent one. In the original translation the real intention of the writer was made even clearer still by the use of the dative case, thus indicating that the expression referred to a place, not a person; but this was almost immediately changed to the more usual genitive, even before the unfortunate insertion of the iota.

The words πόντος πηλὸς, then, simply mean a compressed or densified sea—by no means a bad description of the lower part of the astral plane, which is so constantly typified by water. The clause usually translated "suffered under Pontius Pilate" should be rendered, "He endured the dense sea"—that is, that for us men and for our salvation He allowed Himself to be for the time limited by, and imprisoned in, astral matter. We should note the exact order of the clauses here. Neither of the Creeds as they stand at present contains quite the whole of the original idea; for in the Apostles', though the order is accurate, several stages are omitted, and while the Nicene is fuller, there is a confusion in its arrangement. The first step mentioned is the assumption of the vesture of matter—"the incarnation;" then the taking of human

form, though still in its higher principles only ; then the " suffering under Pontius Pilate," or descent into the astral sea ; and only after that the crucifixion on the cross of *physical* matter, in which He is graphically described as " dead and buried."

" Was crucified, dead and buried." Here again we are face to face with an almost universal misunderstanding whose proportions have been colossal and its results most disastrous. The astonishing evolution of a perfectly reasonable allegory into an absolutely impossible biography has had a very sad influence upon the entire Christian Church and upon the faith which it has taught, and the enormous amount of devotional sympathy which has been poured forth through the centuries in connection with a story of physical suffering that is wholly imaginary is perhaps the most extraordinary and lamentable waste of psychic energy in the history of the world.

Once more we have to repeat that neither the Creed nor the gospels had been originally intended to relate to the life-story of the great Teacher Christ. But the gospel account as it stands now is so extraordinary a conglomerate, so inextricable an entanglement of the solar myth, the Christ-allegory of initiation common to almost all religions, and a tradition of the real story of part of the earth-life of Jesus, that it would be a task of no ordinary difficulty accurately to apportion its various incidents to their respective sources.

The crucifixion and the resurrection, however, clearly belong to the Christ-allegory ; and that they do so ought to be evident to all students from the very fact that the date of their commemoration by the Church is not a fixed one, as would be the anniversary of any actual event, but is movable and dependent upon astronomical calculation. A reference to the prayer-book will show that Easter is celebrated on the Sunday following the date of the next full-moon after the vernal equinox.

Now this method of fixing a date would be grotesque if supposed to apply to a historical anniversary, and is reasonably explicable only upon some modification of the solar myth theory. Undoubtedly there has been a tendency of late years to run that idea to death, and to see a solar myth in every fragment of prehistoric gossip which happens to have found a chronicler ; but this must not blind us to the fact that there is a good deal of truth in the theory, especially when we recognize that the yearly course of the sun is itself used as an allegory to remind those who understand it of the great spiritual truths which it has so long been employed to symbolize.

The orthodox explanation of the arrangement of the commemoration of Easter is stated to be that a great point in the Jewish controversy turned on the crucifixion having taken place at the period of the Passover, and so being emphasized as the true Paschal sacrifice ; and that since the Passover day moved with

the moon, the celebration of Easter had to do so also. This is quite probable, but it in no way invalidates my contention that the mere fact that they are movable shows that neither the Passover nor the Easter festival can be intended to commemorate a definite historical event at all, otherwise they would be celebrated on a definite anniversary. On the contrary, it does very clearly show that the festival so fixed is an astronomical one, connected in some way with the worship of the heavenly bodies upon whose motion it depends.

As a matter of fact the part of the Creed which we are now considering is simply quoted from the rubric of the old Egyptian initiation, which is in turn intended to illustrate the later stages of the descent of the monadic essence into matter. Let us consider first how this descent came to be symbolized as a crucifixion, and then how it was represented before the eyes of the neophytes in ancient Khem.

To understand this clearly we must first endeavour to ascertain what was the meaning attached to the emblem of the cross in the sacred mysteries of antiquity. Most of us were brought up in the belief that the cross was an exclusively Christian symbol, and it may be that there are still some people left who hold to that view. If so, it is of course simply because it has never occurred to them to investigate the question; for if they took up the matter and examined the evidence they could not fail to be struck with the remarkable universality of the use of this sign.

An exhaustive catalogue of the places in which the cross occurs before the Christian era would make a respectable book in itself, but in glancing over some of the modern works on the subject I see that evidence is adduced of its use in one or other of its forms in ancient Egypt, at Nineveh, among the Phœnicians at Gozzo, among the Etruscans and the prehistoric race who inhabited Italy before the Etruscans arrived, upon the pottery of the primitive lake-dwellers, amid the ruins of Palenque, in the earliest remains yet discovered of ancient Peru, India, China, Japan, Corea, Tibet, Babylonia, Assyria, Chaldæa, Persia, Phœnicia, Armenia, Algeria, Ashanti, Cyprus, Rhodes, and among the prehistoric inhabitants of Britain, France, Germany and America—a list which, partial and incomplete as it is, might well astonish the advocates of the exclusively Christian theory of the cross which prevailed in the days of our youth.

The only form of this symbol which is generally associated with Egypt is the *crux ansata*, or handled cross, but it is quite a mistake to suppose that the ancient inhabitants of Khem were unacquainted with the other varieties, for both Greek, Latin and Maltese crosses, as well as representations of the svastika, are to be found among the relics that they have left to us. I had the pleasure in 1884 of going over the museum of Egyptian antiquities at Boulak in the company of Madame Blavatsky and under the guidance of its learned curator, M. Maspero, and I well remember

the interest with which I noticed among the contents of a case of trinkets attributed to one of the very earliest dynasties several beautifully cut cornelian representations of the cross rising out of the heart, exactly similar to the little charms of that shape which may be bought at a Catholic shop in London in the nineteenth century.

The most widely spread of the derivatives of the simple cross is perhaps the svastika, which is to be found, I believe, in every one of the countries mentioned above. It has been generally supposed to be identical with the hammer of Thor, but there seems some reason to believe that the latter sign was originally made simply in the shape of the letter T. At any rate it is certain that when, as King Olaf was keeping Christmas at Drontheim,

O'er his drinking-horn the sign
He made of the cross divine
As he drank, and muttered his prayers,
But the Berserks evermore
Made the sign of the hammer of Thor
Over theirs—

they were in reality using symbols practically identical. The svastika also appears occasionally in later Christian symbology; for example, it may be seen ornamenting the hem of the chasuble of a mediæval bishop in a fine full-length figure sculptured upon one of the tombs in Winchester Cathedral.

The Theosophical student should take care to avoid the mistake, so often made by the more superficial

observer, of confusing the meaning of all these various forms of the cross symbol. Each of them—the Greek, the Latin, the Maltese, the Tau, the Svastika—has its own particular signification, and is by no means to be confounded with any other, as will presently be seen.

There is one particularly gross delusion, unhappily widely prevalent in connection with this subject, from which we ought definitely to clear our minds before we can hope to consider it with profit—and that is the delusion of phallicism. Many writers appear to be absolutely obsessed by this unclean idea, and can see nothing but phallic emblems in all the holiest symbols of antiquity ; whether it be the cross, the triangle, the circle, the pyramid, the obelisk, the dagoba, or the lotus, to their prurient imagination it can have but one obscene signification.

Happily occult investigation assures us (as indeed common-sense would naturally suggest even without such aid) that this unpleasant theory of the origin of all religion is absolutely devoid of foundation. In every case yet examined it has been found that in the earlier and purer stages of any faith none but the spiritual meaning was ever thought of in connection with its various symbols, and that where creation was suggested it was always the creation of ideas by the divine mind. Whenever on the other hand phallic emblems and ceremonies of an indecent nature are found to be associated with a religion, it may be taken as a sure sign of the degeneracy of that religion—an indication

that, at any rate in the country where such emblems and practices may be seen, the pristine purity of the faith has been lost and its spiritual power is rapidly passing away.

Never under any circumstances are the phallicism and the indecency a part of the original conception of a great religion, and the modern theory—that all symbols had primarily some obscene meaning in the minds of the savages who invented them, and that as in the course of ages a nation evolved to a higher level it became ashamed of these cruder ideas and invented far-fetched spiritual interpretations to veil their immodesty—is exactly the reverse of the truth. The great spiritual truth always comes first, and it is only after long years, when that has been forgotten, that a degenerate race endeavours to attach a grosser signification to its symbols.

Putting aside then all later misrepresentations, what meaning was originally conveyed by the world-wide symbol of the cross? Part at any rate of the answer is given to us by Madame Blavatsky herself in the proem to *The Secret Doctrine*, when she describes the signs impressed upon the successive leaves of a certain archaic manuscript. It will be remembered that first of all there is the plain white circle which is understood to typify the Absolute ; in that appears the central spot, the sign that the First Logos has entered upon a cycle of activity ; the spot broadens into a line dividing the circle into two parts, thus symbolizing the dual aspect

of the Second Logos as male-female, God-man, spirit-matter ; and then, to show the next stage, this dividing line is crossed by another, and we have the hieroglyph of the Third Logos—God the Holy Ghost, the Lord, the Life-giver.

But all these symbols, be it noted, are still within the circle, and so are emblems of different stages in the unfolding of the Triple Logos—not as yet of His manifestation. When in the fulness of time He prepares for this further descent, the symbol changes, usually in one or other of two ways. Sometimes the circle falls away altogether, and we have then the even-armed Greek cross as the sign of the Third Logos at the comment of a *mâhakalpa*, or great cycle, with His creative power held in readiness for exercise, but not as yet exercised.

✓ Along this line of symbolism the next step is the *svastika*, which always implies motion—the creative power in activity ; for the lines added at right angles to the arms of the cross are supposed to represent flames streaming backwards as the cross whirls round, and thus they doubly indicate the eternal activity of the Universal Life, first by the ceaseless outpouring of the fire from the centre through the arms, and secondly by the rotation of the cross itself. Another method of expressing the same idea is seen in the Maltese cross, in which the arms ever widening out as they recede from the centre once more typify the divine energy spreading itself forth in every direction of space.

Sometimes instead of dropping the circle altogether the cross simply extends itself outside it. Then we get the equal-armed cross with the small circle in the midst of it, and in the next stage that circle blossoms forth into the rose—another well-known life-emblem—and so we have the familiar symbol from which the Rosicrucians take their name. Again, the cross not only bears the mystic rose in its centre, but itself becomes rosy in colour, showing that that which is poured out from it and through it is ever the fire of the divine love.

Naturally the great occult rule, "As above, so below," holds good in this connection also, and with very slight variation these symbols may be, and sometimes are, employed to indicate much lower stages of evolution; hence Madame Blavatsky's reference to the various races of men in her explanation of them. One can easily see how out of a misunderstanding of this lower interpretation, and its association at one stage with the separation of the sexes, the unsavoury ideas of phallism would take their rise. Indeed, the knowledge of the true meaning of the Greek cross seems to have been lost to public view at a very early period; its connection with the Third Logos has remained for ages known to occultists only, and superficial students have almost invariably confused it with the Latin cross of the Second Logos, the derivation of which in reality is entirely different.

In tracing the symbolism of this Latin cross, or

rather of the crucifix, back into the night of time, the investigators had expected to find the figure disappear, leaving behind what they supposed to be the earlier cross-emblem. As a matter of fact exactly the reverse took place, and they were startled to find that eventually the cross drops away, leaving only the figure with uplifted arms. No longer is there any thought of pain or sorrow connected with that figure, though still it tells of sacrifice; rather is it now the symbol of the purest joy the world can hold—the joy of freely giving—for it typifies the Divine Man standing in space with arms upraised in blessing, casting abroad His gifts to all humanity, pouring forth freely of Himself in all directions, descending into that “dense sea” of matter, to be cribbed, cabined and confined therein, in order that through that descent *we* may come into being.

- ✓ A sacrifice, truly (at least from our point of view), yet with no thought of suffering, but only of transcendent joy. For that is the essence of the law of sacrifice—the law which moves the worlds even down here. So long as any thought of pain is connected with it, the sacrifice is not perfect; so long as a man is forcing himself to do that which he would rather not do, he is but on the way towards the fulfilling of the great law. But when he gives himself fully and freely because, having once seen the glory and the beauty of the Great Sacrifice, there is for him no other course possible in the three worlds

but to join himself with it, however far away, however feebly and imperfectly ; when he gives himself without ever thinking of pain or trouble—indeed, without any thought of himself at all, but only of that for which he is working ; then, and then only, is his sacrifice perfect, for it is of the same nature as the sacrifice of the Logos, and partakes of the essence of that law of love which alone is the law of life eternal.

That even the early Christian Church had some tradition of all this seems to be shown by the fact that in the paintings in the catacombs at Rome we frequently find just such a figure as the one described, with arms uplifted in the peculiar manner indicated, standing in the midst of the twelve apostles, exactly where the figure of the Christ would naturally be expected. This is generally spoken of as the “ orante ” or praying figure : it has sometimes been supposed to be feminine, and has given rise, I believe, to considerable speculation among ecclesiastical archæologists, but the most natural explanation of it appears to me to be that which I have suggested above.

We see, then, that the cross has been used from very early periods as the symbol of matter and manifestation—of the material world. It was therefore by no means unnatural that the further descent of the Divine Man into matter should be symbolized by the binding of the body to the cross, which also signified accurately enough the extreme limitation of the action of the Logos by such descent—the extent to which

His expression of Himself was curtailed on this physical plane. Of course the nails, the blood, the wounds, and all the ghastly horrors of the modern representation, are simply accretions due to the diseased imagination of the materializing monk, who had neither the intellect nor the education which could enable him to appreciate the beautiful meaning conveyed by the original allegory.

This much at least of the truth is now beginning to be understood by even the Christian investigators, or in an article by H. Marucchi, the well-known Catholic archæologist, in the new dictionary of the Abbé Vigoroux, the writer refers to the fifth-century gate of Santa Sabina at Rome and to an ivory of the same date in the British Museum as the oldest known examples of the crucifix, and says, "It is to be remarked that the Christ is here represented as still living, with the eyes open and without any mark of physical suffering."

He goes on to say that in the sixth century the crucifix is more frequent, but still the figure is always living and clothed in a long tunic, and that it is only in the twelfth century that "they cease to represent the Christ as living and triumphant on the cross." He seems to think that the new school of painting of Cimabue and Giotto is to a large extent responsible for the change.

We are not, however, without other testimony which shows that there have been many who have to some

extent comprehended the true signification of the cross. The description given in the Acts of Judas Thomas of the Christ standing in glory above the cross which separated the lower world from the higher, and that of the splendid vision of the cross of light, by looking into and through which all the manifested worlds were to be seen, while yet the aura of the Heavenly Man included all, interpenetrated all, and was the life of all—these are sufficient to evidence that truth was not left entirely without its witnesses in the earlier ages of our era, and that its light was absolutely hidden only when the dense fog of Christian superstition descended with all its weight upon Europe and stifled the whole of its intellectual life for close upon a thousand years.

It may be that there are some who will feel this wider presentation of the true meaning of the cross to be vaguer and colder than the very concrete form in which it had previously shaped itself to them—will feel that with the emancipation of their minds from the image of that nightmare tale of appalling physical suffering they have lost also some familiar sentimental associations which they can hardly help regretting.

If there be any such among my readers let me remind them that while we cannot but recoil with horror from all the terrible and indeed blasphemous ideas associated by the orthodox with the thought of crucifixion, we may yet gratefully recognize in the sign of the cross a constant reminder of the ineffable self-

sacrifice of the Logos—of the enormous patience with which His almighty power bears with all limitations, in order that in the slow progress of their development these manifold forms which He takes may be gradually expanded and yet may not too soon be broken, so that each of them may be serviceable to the uttermost.

It may serve to remind us also that man himself is thus crucified, if he did but know it; and that if he knows it not, it is because the living soul, the true Christ within him, is still blindly identifying himself with the cross of matter to which he is bound. It may help us to realize that our bodies, whether physical, astral or mental, are not ourselves, and that whenever we find as it were two selves warring within us we have to remember that we are in truth the higher, and not the lower—the Christ and not the cross.

And indeed this symbol of the cross may be to us as a touch-stone to distinguish the good from the evil in many of the difficulties of life. "Only those actions through which shines the light of the cross are worthy of the life of the disciple," says one of the verses in a book of occult maxims; and it is interpreted to mean that all that the aspirant does should be prompted by the fervour of self-sacrificing love. The same thought appears in a later verse: "When one enters the path, he lays his heart upon the cross; when the cross and the heart have become one, then hath he reached the goal." So, perchance, we may measure our progress

cerned, was not at all inaptly symbolized as death and burial.

“He descended into hell.” But meantime, while the mere outer husk of the man was thus “dead and buried,” he himself was fully alive and conscious elsewhere. Many and strange were the lessons which he had to learn, the experiences which he had to undergo, the tests through which he had to pass during his sojourn in that astral world ; but they were all carefully calculated to familiarize him with this new sphere of action in which he found himself, to enable him to understand it, to give him confidence and self-reliance—in fact, so to train him that he could safely face all its perils, could use its powers with calmness and discretion, and could thus become a fitting instrument upon that plane in the hands of those who help the world.

This was the descent into the underworld—not of course into the hell of the gross Christian conception, but into Hades, the world of the departed, where it was undoubtedly the work of the initiate (among many other duties) to “preach to the spirits in prison,” as the Christian tradition puts it—not, however, as that tradition ignorantly supposes, to the spirits of those who, having had the misfortune to live in times long past, could attain salvation only by thus after death hearing and accepting this particular form of faith—not to them, but to the spirits of those recently departed from this life, and still imprisoned and held down upon the

astral plane by desires unexhausted and passions unsubdued.

To endeavour to help this vast army of unfortunates, by pointing out to them the true course of their evolution and the best method of hastening it, was one of the duties of the initiate then, as it is one of the duties of the Masters' pupils now; and therefore at this solemn ceremony, by which he was formally put into relation with the Great Brotherhood, he received his first lesson in what would thereafter form no inconsiderable portion of his work.

During this same "descent into hell" it was that, according to the Egyptian rite, the candidate had to pass through what used to be called "the tests of earth, water, air and fire"—unless indeed he had already experienced them at an earlier stage of his development. In other words, he had to learn with that absolute certainty that comes not by theory but by practical experience, that in his astral body none of these elements could by any possibility be hurtful to him—none could oppose any obstacle in the way of the work which he had to do.

When functioning in the physical body we are thoroughly convinced that fire will burn us, that water will drown us, that the solid rock forms an impassable barrier to our progress, that we cannot with safety launch ourselves unsupported into the ambient air. So deeply is this conviction engrained in us that it costs most men a good deal of effort to overcome the

instinctive action which follows from it, and to realize that in the astral body the densest rock offers no impediment to their freedom of motion, that they may leap with impunity from the highest cliff, and plunge with the most absolute confidence into the heart of the raging volcano or the deepest abysses of the fathomless ocean.

Yet until a man *knows* this—knows it sufficiently to act upon his knowledge instinctively and confidently—he is comparatively useless for astral work, since in emergencies that are constantly arising he would be perpetually paralyzed by imaginary disabilities. For this reason the candidate had to pass the tests of earth, water, air and fire thousands of years ago—for this reason he has to pass them to-day. For the same reason he has to go through many a strange experience—to meet face to face with calm courage the most terrifying apparitions amid the most loathsome surroundings—to show in fact that he can be trusted under any and all of the varied groups of circumstances in which he may at any moment find himself. This then is one among the many uses of the old rite of the “descent into hell.”

“The third day he rose again from the dead.” It must surely have struck any thoughtful student of the received gospel narrative that to describe the interval between Friday evening and very early on the Sunday morning as three complete days involves a certain amount of poetical licence. It might be contended

that such an interval was not inconsistent with the statement of the Creed that he rose again "*on* the third day;" but the person offering this somewhat disingenuous argument would have entirely to ignore the quite definite assertion attributed to Jesus that "the Son of Man shall remain three days and three nights in the heart of the earth."

The real explanation of these apparently bewildering discrepancies is clear enough when the true interpretation is adopted. In the later and degenerate days of the Mysteries, when attempts were made to minimize all requirements and to make entrance easy for less worthy candidates who were unable to pass into the trance, it was soon found that to spend in rigid seclusion upon the physical plane the seventy-seven hours originally so well occupied upon the astral was to certain types of mind insufferably tedious; so the sycophantic hierophants of that later time conveniently discovered that seventy-seven was merely a clerical error for twenty-seven, and that the original form of the rubric "*after* the third day" really meant nothing more than "*on* the third day"—thus saving their noble patrons fully two days of what was practically solitary confinement.

This later and degraded form is accurately enough represented by the symbolism used in the gospels; but it could never have been adopted until the real meaning of the original ritual had been forgotten. Only after three clear days and nights and part of

a fourth had passed was the still entranced candidate of more ancient days raised from the sarcophagus in which he had lain, and borne into the outer air at the eastern side of the pyramid or temple, so that the first rays of the rising sun might fall upon his face and awaken him from his long sleep. And when we remember that the whole of this ritual typifies the descent of the Second Logos into matter, it will not be difficult for us to see why this particular period of time was chosen.

For three long rounds and part of a fourth the monadic essence sinks deeper and ever deeper into the slough of dense matter, and only when in the fourth round the sun arises—when the Lords of its Flame appear upon earth—does that essence rise from the dead, and begin at last to enter upon that mighty sweep of its upward arc which in the end shall set it at the right hand of the Father.

“He ascended into heaven.” It needs no explanation to show the meaning of this phrase with reference to the upward progress of the human soul; but the place which it fills in the old Egyptian ritual is worthy of our notice. For the lessons which the candidate had to learn at his initiation were not concluded with his experiences on the astral plane; it was necessary for him at this stage of his evolution to be brought into contact with something far higher and wider even than this. Those who have studied that section of Theosophical literature which treats of the Path of

Holiness will remember that the Sotâpanna, "the man who has entered upon the stream," receives as part of his initiation the first touch of awakening consciousness upon the buddhic plane.

This was of course the case in the Egyptian rite also, and it was this transcendent experience, changing as it did the man's entire conception of life and of evolution, which was spoken of as the ascent into heaven. By it the man for the first time realized in experience that great doctrine which is so familiar to us all as a theory—the spiritual brotherhood of man and the unity of all that lives. Yet so different is the holding of this merely as a theory from the knowing it absolutely as a fact in nature that, as has been said, this experience changes the man's whole life and attitude, so that never thereafter can he look upon anything in the world as he did before. Keen though his sympathy with suffering must be, yet his sorrow can never again be hopeless, for he knows that the sufferer also is a part of the one great life, and that therefore all must at last be well.

"And sitteth on the right hand of God the Father almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead." Here it will be seen that for the first time we come to a definite divergence of meaning between the wording of the Creed as we have it now and that of the Egyptian rubric. In the latter this clause is simply an extension of the former, and puts before us very clearly and beautifully the object

of the whole vast course of evolution: "he shall be carried up into heaven to be the right hand of Him from Whom he came, having learnt to guide the living and the dead."

One trace at least which is accessible to ordinary scholarship is left to us to confirm the idea that this may have been the original reading, for in the *Regula* of Apelles, the disciple of Marcion, this clause runs, "the right hand of the Father, whence he *hath* come to rule the living and the dead." Thus all reference to the expected second advent of Christ is removed, and we have an important statement which not only emphasizes the great fact that the life which is poured forth returns in fullest measure to Him from whom it came, but also declares that the whole vast process was undertaken in order that mankind so returning should be the right hand of that Father almighty in His work of guiding the living and the dead. The great truth that all power which is gained is but held in trust, to be used as a means of helping others, has rarely been more clearly and more grandly set forth.

Not only has much misunderstanding been caused by the confusion which has been here introduced into the Creed, but this misunderstanding has been further accentuated by the use of the expression "to judge." Evidence is not wanting to show that in the English of the period when these documents were translated the significance of this word was a wider one than

that usually assigned to it now, as we may see from such remarks as "Deborah judged Israel at that time" (Judges iv. 4), and "After him arose Jair, a Gileadite, and judged Israel twenty and two years" (Judges x. 3), etc., where it is obvious that to judge is simply synonymous with to rule—a meaning which brings us much nearer to the conception of guiding and helping conveyed in the Egyptian formula. Well may it be said, in the words added in the Nicæan symbol, of this magnificent conception of a ruler whose only object is to guide and to help: "His kingdom shall have no end."

"I believe in the Holy Ghost." In this clause—the final one of the original Creed drawn up by the Council of Nicæa—we return once more to the formula as given by the Christ. It has already been explained in the earlier part of this volume that the Holy Ghost corresponds to the Third Logos or Mahat—the "Spirit of God which broods over the face of the waters" of space, and so brings into existence matter as we know it to-day. To His energy are due all the primary combinations of the ultimate atoms of our planes, so that the "atoms" with which modern chemistry deals are monuments of His work. His action brought them into existence in a certain definite order—an order which, so far as investigation into this subject has yet been carried, appears to correspond with that of their atomic weights, so that substances having high atomic weights, such as lead, gold or platinum,

are of much later formation than elements of low atomic weight, such as hydrogen, helium or lithium.

At the Council of Constantinople in 381 A.D., the bare statement of the existence of the Holy Ghost, which was all that was contained either in the Apostles' Creed or in the original form of that of Nicæa, was considerably amplified, and the beautiful title of "the Life-giver" was then for the first time inserted. The English version unfortunately lends itself here to a very common misunderstanding, and most people as they recite "the Lord and Giver of Life" probably suppose it to mean—if they ever think of its meaning at all—the Lord of Life and the Giver of Life. A reference to the original Greek at once shows that such a construction is entirely unwarranted, and that the proper translation is simply "the Lord, the Life-giver."

Well might such a title be assigned to Him, not only because of the mighty work which He did when the solar system came into existence, not only because from Him comes all life of which we know anything (for the omnipresent *jīva* is but the manifestation of Him upon these lower planes), but because of the equally stupendous work which He is doing even now. Whether the effect of that first great outpouring of energy is now complete, or whether chemical elements of a still more elaborate kind are still in process of production, we know not; but it is at least certain that all around us an evolution is going on upon a

scale so vast in its totality, yet so infinitely minute in its method, that we live in the midst of it, yet in the most absolute unconsciousness of it.

Not the spiritual evolution of the immortal soul in man, for that is the work of the First Logos of our system; not the evolution which science recognizes as ever in progress in the animal and vegetable kingdoms—the development of intelligence and faculty by means of repeated experiences, and the correspondent modification in outer forms which is the result of this; not even the evolution of the power of combination in the mineral kingdom, so that ever more and more complex chemical compounds are gradually coming into being—for all these are part of the wonderful activity of the Second Logos; but within and behind all these is the evolution of the atom itself.

To explain the method of this evolution would take far more space than can be devoted to it here, and would also be somewhat outside the immediate scope of a treatise on the Creed; but an indication of the direction in which it works may readily be given to those who have read Mrs. Besant's article on "Occult Chemistry" in *Lucifer* for November, 1895. It will be remembered that, in the illustration accompanying that paper, the atom was shown as composed of a series of spiral tubes arranged in a certain order, and it was explained that these tubes themselves were in turn composed of finer tubes spirally coiled, and these finer tubes in turn of others still finer, and so on.

These finer tubes have been called spirillæ of the first, second and third orders respectively; and it is found that before we get back to the straight filament or line of astral atoms, by the convolutions of ten of which lines the physical atom is ultimately formed, we have to unwind seven series of the spirillæ, each of which is wound at right angles to the one preceding it.

Now in the perfected physical atom, as it will be at the end of the seventh round, all of these orders of spirillæ will be fully vitalized and active, each with a different order of force flowing through it: and thus this particular part of the work of the Holy Ghost will be accomplished. At present we are in the fourth round, and only four of these orders of spirillæ are as yet in activity, so that even the very physical matter in which we have to work is very far from having unfolded its full capacities. This mighty process of atomic evolution, which interpenetrates all else and yet moves on its way absolutely independent of all conditions, is ever being carried steadily on by the wonderful impulse of that first outpouring of the Third Logos.

It seems clear that all this marvellous activity is and has ever been steadily tending towards differentiation—individualization, as it were; while it is equally evident that the action of the second great outpouring gives all sorts of new powers of combination which appear to be tending back again towards a kind of

higher unity, so that we have here what looks at first sight like an opposition between the working of these two mighty forces.

Now, as I have said before, it is obvious that with such exceedingly fragmentary knowledge of all these wonderful operations as we at present possess, and with the further disadvantage of looking at them all from so low a plane, examining all their action as it were from below instead of from above, any ideas which even the wisest of us may form as to the real working of the great scheme must necessarily be so incomplete that they may well be hopelessly misleading, and unless put forward with due reservation and modesty they would be only too likely to be blasphemous as well. Yet it seems to me that, in such examination as is possible for us of this marvellous complexity of evolution, we do get here and there glimpses of a part of its plan—hints which we can test by applying them to different levels of this process of development.

Here, for example, we seem to see clearly in action the broad principle of first of all generating a certain set of elements, and endowing them with so much of stability, and as it were individuality, that under all ordinary conditions of temperature and pressure they maintain their position as separate entities; while as a later and distinctly higher stage of their evolution there is developed within them the capability of and the desire for union. It is impossible not to be re-

minded, by this rough outline of evolution in the mineral kingdom, of the statement that the Logos Himself has become manifest only in order that from Him might emanate an immense multitude of individuals who, when they have become sufficiently separated to be each a living and powerful centre, shall rise again towards perfect union and realize their oneness in Him.

Even when we turn to examine the individual development of man, we may still see the same principle working. After man as an individual with a causal body has definitely come into existence, the whole force of his environment seems to be directed to the evolution in him of manas, the discriminative and separative faculty, which in him as the microcosm distinctly corresponds with Mahat, the universal Mind or the Holy Spirit in the macrocosm. Much later comes the development of the buddhi, the faculty of combining and unifying, which may be taken as in many ways corresponding with the Second Logos in the wider world. Indeed, incomprehensible though the statement may be, hopeless as would be any effort to explain it, it is in reality true that the principles in man which we call âtmâ, buddhi, manas, are not merely correspondences, not merely even reflections or rays of the Three Great Logoi, but are somehow in very truth themselves those glorious entities, uncreate, incomprehensible, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

In the stages of world-evolution also we find the same general law holding good. In it also so far the action has been chiefly creative and separative, chiefly concerned with the development of manas, and we have scarcely as yet even the dawn of the unfolding of the buddhi, the great unifying power which is truly the Christ in man.

Here and there we see one man who shows a little of its influence—here and there faint indications of what is to come may be discerned by those who know how to read the signs of the times. Nay, it may even be that some of the most terrible features of our social condition, evil though they are in their results, evil in their organization because so hopelessly marred by the selfishness and ignorance (and blind hatred of every one wiser and better than themselves) which are always shown by their promoters, may yet in all their iniquity have this much dim reflection of a hope behind them, that they may perchance be the first manifestation that there is a force pressing behind—the first blind and misdirected gropings of the uninstructed after the true unity that is one day to come, though by means the very opposite to those which are now employed.

We must remember that after all we have but just passed the turning-point of the whole system of evolution—but just entered upon the mighty upward sweep which is to end in divinity. We are still in the fourth round—the round properly speaking devoted to the

development of kâma and the astral body—and the fact that we find ourselves possessed of manas at all at this stage of the proceedings is due almost entirely to the help and stimulation given to our humanity by the advent of the great Lords of the Flame at a period which is after all comparatively recent. The full development of manas even is not due until the next round, so that surely the merest foretaste of the stupendous power of buddhi is all that we can expect for a very long time yet.

Still, nature is slowly moving forward towards that stage, and the future is with those who even now will recognize that fact and work for it—who will strive in every possible way to help forward the unifying principle, to break down the barriers of distrust and hatred which unfortunately so often exist between class and class, between nation and nation. That indeed is truly Theosophical work—the work of our Masters—work in which it is the greatest of privileges to be allowed to join, to however small an extent, in however humble a capacity.

“Who proceedeth from the Father and the Son.” It was with reference to this doctrine of the procession of the Holy Ghost that the great schism arose which rent the Christian Church in twain, on the question whether the Third Person of the Trinity came forth from the First alone, or from the First and the Second. Looking as we are doing at the esoteric meaning of the symbol, we see that the Western Church in no

way added to or corrupted the original doctrine by inserting its celebrated "filioque" clause, but only expressed in words what must have been obvious from the first to any one who read behind the mere letter of the formula.

Nearest of all to the truth perhaps came the rendering of St. John Damascene: "who proceedeth from the Father through the Son" (*De Hymno Trisag.*, n. 28); yet it seems as though it would have been better still if in the original document the words used to express the coming forth of the Second and Third Logoi had been interchanged—if it had been written that the Son proceeded from the Father, and that the Holy Ghost was begotten of the Son. It has been already explained that the real meaning of *μονογενὴς* is coming forth from one alone, and not from the interaction of a pair. Everything else in nature of which we know is produced by the interaction of two factors, whether these factors are separate entities, as they usually are, or merely two poles included within the same organism, as in the case of the parthenogenetic reproduction of the alternate generations of aphides.

What is commonly called the procession of the Holy Ghost is in no sense an exception to this rule, for the duality of the Second Logos has always been clearly recognized, and although in the modern Christian system the two poles or aspects are expressed only as divinity and humanity, in older faiths and even in the Gnostic traditions they were often considered as

male and female respectively, and the Second Logos was frequently spoken of as containing within Himself the characteristics of both the sexes, and was even called "The Father-Mother."

"Who with the Father and the Son together is worshipped and glorified." This simply means that the Three Logoi are to be regarded as equally worthy of the deepest reverence, as equally standing apart from all else within the system to which they have given birth—that "in this Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, but the whole three persons are coeternal together and coequal," as far at any rate as this æon is concerned—all equally to be glorified by man, since his debt of gratitude, for the labour and stupendous sacrifice involved in his evolution, is due to all three alike.

"Who spake by the prophets." This clause, which is one of those first incorporated in the Creed at the Council of Constantinople, embodies a very early misconception for which it is not difficult to account, and though it does not directly refer to the story of Jesus, it must none the less be attributed to the tendency which we have called (*a*). The meaning of the original expression which it represents can perhaps be best rendered into English as "Who manifested through the angels;" and when we remember that in Greek the words "angel" and "messenger" are identical, we shall easily see how in the mind of a Jewish translator eagerly anxious to emphasize the continuity of

the newer teaching with that of his own religion, what to him would seem an obscure passage referring to "manifestation through His messengers," came to be interpreted as indicating the inspiration of the Hebrew prophets.

The Jewish faith, corrupt and grossly material as it was, had still some tradition of the messengers through whom the Logos manifested Himself in matter—the seven great archangels, later called "the seven spirits before the throne of God"—the seven lesser Logoi (lesser only in comparison with the ineffable splendour of the Trinity) who are the first emanation of the Godhead. But it was manifestly impossible that the reference to them in the passage under consideration should be understood by a mind already obsessed with the idea that all that was said of the Second Logos was to be taken as descriptive only of a human teacher. If the Second Logos were but a man, and the Third a vague influence proceeding from him, then the messengers through whom that influence had previously manifested must obviously be men also, and it was quite natural that the supposed inspiration of his own prophets should at once occur to the mind of an Israelite. The grandeur of the true conception was far above out of his sight; he had already coarsened and degraded it beyond the power of words to express, and so he saw nothing incongruous in regarding the itinerant preachers of his own petty tribe as directly controlled by the influence of the Supreme.

“The holy catholic Church.” This clause appears in the Nicene Creed as the “one catholic and apostolic Church,” and has always been understood to signify the body of faithful believers all over the world—the word catholic simply meaning universal. This is in effect a statement of the brotherhood of man, for it proclaims how community of interest in spiritual things draws together men out of every nation, “without distinction of race, creed, caste, sex or colour,” as the first object of the Theosophical Society puts it. If we will but put aside the misinterpretations which later sectarianism has accumulated round these words, and think what they really mean, we shall see at once how beautifully expressive they are.

The Church is the *ἐκκλησία*—the body of those who are “called out” of the ordinary worldly life of misdirected energy by the common knowledge which they possess of the great facts underlying nature—the men who, because they know the relative importance of each, have “set their affection on things above, and not on things of the earth,” no matter to what nation they may belong, nor by what name they may choose to call their faith in spiritual things.

That by no means all of them yet recognize their brotherhood, that many of them distrust and misunderstand one another, sad though it is, in no way alters the great fact that because they regard things spiritual rather than things temporal, because they have definitely ranged themselves on the side of good instead

of evil, of evolution instead of retardation, they have a bond between them of community of aim which is stronger far than any of the external divisions that separate them—stronger because it is spiritual, and belongs to a higher plane than this.

This is the true Church of the Christ, and it is catholic because among its numbers there are men of every race and creed under heaven—"of all nations and kindred and peoples and tongues;" it is holy, because its members are striving to make their lives holier and better; it is apostolic, for in very truth all its members are apostles—"men sent forth" (though many of them know it not) by the great Power who is guiding all, that they may be His expression in the earth—His emissaries to help their more ignorant brethren, by precept and example, to learn the all-important lesson which they have already made part of their own lives. And whatever its outward divisions may be, this Church is fundamentally one—"elect from every nation, yet one o'er all the earth"—one in essence, though it may be many a century yet before all its members realize their spiritual unity.

"The communion of saints." This is interpreted in two ways by modern orthodoxy. The first takes it merely as an extension of the previous clause, "the holy catholic Church (which is) the communion of the saints." That is to say that the Church consists of the fellowship of the holy ones in every land, very much as has just been explained—except that of

course in the orthodox system none but the *Christians* of every nation are recognized as brothers ! The other method of interpretation gives a somewhat more mystical sense to the word communion, and explains the clause as pointing out the intimate association between Christians on earth and those who have passed away—the blessed dead, more especially those of transcendent virtue, who are usually called the saints.

As is so often the case, the truth includes both hypotheses, and yet is grander far than either of them, for the true meaning of the expression of belief in the communion of the saints is the recognition of the existence and the functions of the Great Brotherhood of Adepts which is in charge of so much of the evolution of mankind. Thus it is truly an extension of the idea of the brotherhood of man implied in the belief in the holy catholic Church, yet it also involves the closest possible association and even communication with the noblest of those who have gone before us. But it is much more than all this, for to those who really grasp it and begin even dimly to understand what it means, it gives a sense of absolute peace and security which passes all understanding—which can never be shaken or lost through any of the changes and chances of this mortal life.

When once this is realized by any man, however keen may be his sympathy with the manifold sufferings of humanity—however he may fail to understand

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much of what he sees in the world around him—the element of hopelessness, which before made it all so terrible, is gone, and gone for ever. For though he feels that dread mysteries, as yet but partially explained, underlie many an act in the great drama of the world's history—though questions may sometimes arise within him to which man *can* give no answer, and to which the higher powers *have* given none thus far, yet he knows, with the absolute certainty born of experience, that the power, the wisdom and the love which guide the evolution of which he is part, are far more than strong enough to carry it through to a glorious end. He knows that no human sympathy can be as great as theirs who stand behind; none can love man as they do—they who are sacrificing themselves for man. Yet they know all, from the beginning to the end; and they are satisfied.

“The forgiveness of sins;” or, as the Greek may be more literally rendered: “the emancipation from sins.” For the more mystical side of the idea symbolized in the ecclesiastical doctrine of the so-called forgiveness of sins, the reader may be referred to Mrs. Besant's article in the *Theosophical Review* for November, 1897. Here, however, we have to deal not with the later developments of dogma, but rather with the meaning attached to this clause in the original formula, which was a comparatively simple one.

No idea even remotely resembling that suggested by the modern word “forgiveness” was in any way con-

nected with it; it was a straightforward declaration that the candidate acknowledged the necessity of setting himself free from the dominion of all his sins before attempting to enter upon the path of occult progress, and its spirit would be far more accurately rendered by an expression of belief in the *demission* of sins rather than their *remission*. It was primarily intended to be a definite reminder of the principle which requires moral development as an absolute prerequisite to advancement, and a warning against the danger of the method of the darker magical schools which did not exact morality as a necessary qualification for membership.

But it had also another and an inner meaning, referring to a higher stage in man's development, and this is more clearly brought out in the form assumed by this clause in the Nicæan symbol, "I acknowledge one baptism for the remission of sins." Again of course we must substitute the idea of emancipation for that of forgiveness, and remembering that baptism has always been the symbol of initiation, we have before us a conception which might be expressed in the Buddhist phraseology with which students of Theosophical literature are more familiar: "I acknowledge one initiation for the casting-off of the fetters." The candidate proclaims by this statement that he has definitely set before him as his goal the Sotâpatti initiation—*one* initiation, given only by the one Brotherhood in the name of the Great Initiator—

in and through which he gains power entirely to cast off the three fetters of doubt, superstition and the delusion of self.

He gains power, I say advisedly, for however clear his intellectual convictions on these points may have been previously, he does not attain the certainty which comes from definite knowledge until he has experienced that touch of buddhic consciousness which is part of the ritual of that first initiation—the portal of the Path of Holiness. And in that touch, momentary though it may be, not only does he obtain this vast increase of knowledge which puts a new face for him upon the whole of nature, but he also enters for the moment into a relation with his Master far more intimate than anything he has ever before comprehended. And in that flash of contact he receives a very real baptism, for there pours into his soul such a rush of power, of wisdom and of love, that he is at once strengthened for effort that before would have seemed inconceivable to him. Not that the Master's feeling or attitude has in any way changed, but that by the development of this new faculty the pupil has become capable of seeing more of what he is, and so of receiving more from him.

In a very true sense then is this Sohan initiation “a baptism for the emancipation from sins,” and the baptism administered to infants soon after their birth was but a symbol and a prophecy of this—a ceremony intended as a kind of dedication of the young life to

the effort to enter upon the Path. Very soon after the materializing tendency set in the true meaning of all this was obscured, and then it became necessary to invent some reason for the baptismal ceremony. Some tradition of its connection with the putting away of sins still survived, and as it was obvious, even to a Church father, that a baby could hardly have committed any serious offences, the extraordinary doctrine of "original sin" was invented, and did much harm in the world.

"The resurrection of the body." Here again is a case similar to the last—a case where a doctrine, perfectly simple and reasonable in itself, falls gradually into oblivion and misconstruction among the ignorant, until a monstrous and absurd dogma is erected to take the place of the forgotten truth. What numbers of books have been written and sermons preached in defence of this scientifically impossible teaching of the resurrection of the physical body—the "agenrisyng of fleish," as it is called in an English Creed of about the date 1400—when all the time the clause meant nothing more or less than an affirmation of the doctrine of reincarnation!

This, which in more enlightened times was a universal belief, had gradually dropped out of popular knowledge in later Egypt and in classical Greece and Rome, though of course it was never lost sight of in the teaching of the Mysteries. It was quite plainly stated in the original formula given by the Christ to

his disciples, and it was only the gross ignorance of later days which perverted the simple explanation, that after death man would again appear upon the earth in bodily form, into a theory that he would at some future time collect the very particles of which his physical vehicle had been constructed at the moment of death, and once more build up that corpse into the semblance which it then wore.

In the Nicene Creed the clause now appears in the more comprehensible form, "I look for the resurrection of the dead," though in some of its earlier variants it also speaks of the resurrection of the flesh. Yet the simple idea that what was meant was resurrection *in* a body, not resurrection *of* that same body, was not suggested by any of these renderings. Looking at the subject impartially, it certainly seems that nothing else could satisfy the requirements of the teaching given. Reason leads us to suppose that the corruptible body cannot rise again; therefore that which rises must be the incorruptible soul. Since this soul is to rise in a body, it must rise in a fresh body—that is, in the body of an infant.

Evidence also is not wanting even on this physical plane in support of the theory (which we from other sources know to be true) that this belief in reincarnation was held by many at the alleged time of Christ, and was also held and taught by him. A metempsychosis of souls was a distinctive feature of the Jewish Kabala; we have the testimony of Josephus that the

Pharisees believed in the return to earth of the souls of the just in other bodies, and the question put to Jesus regarding the man born blind distinctly indicates a knowledge of the fact of reincarnation, as does also his own remark on the rebirth of Elijah in the form of John the Baptist.

Jerome and Lactantius both bear witness to the fact that a belief in metempsychosis existed in the early Church. Origen not only expressed his belief in it, but was careful to state that his ideas on the subject were not drawn from Plato, but that he was instructed by Clemens of Alexandria, who had studied under Pantænus, a disciple of apostolic men. Indeed, it seems by no means improbable that this doctrine of reincarnation formed one of the "mysteries" of the early Church, taught only to those who were found worthy to hear.

"And the life everlasting." The semi-poetical form into which our translators have thrown this clause has led the orthodox to see in it a reference to eternal life in heaven, but in reality it bears no such signification; it is merely a straightforward statement of the immortality of the human soul. In the Celtic Creed the form is simpler still, "I believe in life after death," while the Nicæan symbol expresses it as "the life of the world to come," or, to translate more accurately, "the life of the coming age."

Having now glanced through the various clauses of the Nicene and the Apostles' Creeds, it remains for us

only to take up such points in the Athanasian Creed as have not already been dealt with in the consideration of the earlier symbols. The Athanasian Creed is usually regarded as little more than an expansion of the earlier formulæ, and, as has already been stated, criticism fixes the date of its composition comparatively late. Much obloquy has been cast upon it in recent years in consequence of what have been called its damnatory clauses, and many people who naturally enough entirely misunderstood their real meaning have on this account regarded the whole Creed with horror—indeed some of our most enlightened clergy, in open defiance of the directions of the rubric, have declined to allow its recitation in their churches. Had the meaning ordinarily attached to those clauses been the true one, such a refusal would have been far more than justified, yet to the mind of the Theosophical student they are entirely unobjectionable, for he sees in them not a blasphemous proclamation of the inability of the Logos to carry through the evolution which He has commenced, but merely the statement of a well-known fact in nature.

Let us take up the examination of the *Quicumque vult*, omitting, of course, such parts of its explanation as would be mere repetitions of what has already been said, and confining ourselves to the points in which this Creed is fuller than the other two.

In the ordinary interpretation of the opening words, "Whosoever will be saved," we at once encounter a

misconception of the most glaring character, for they are commonly supposed to embody some such blasphemous idea as "saved from eternal damnation," or "saved from the wrath of god" (I really cannot honour with a capital letter any being who is supposed to be capable in his anger of committing so unspeakable an atrocity as the infliction of endless torture!). A far more accurate translation, and one much less likely to be misunderstood, would have been "Whoever wishes to be safe," and when it is put in this form any student of occultism will at once see exactly what is meant.

We have all read in early Theosophical literature about the critical period of the fifth round, and we thus understand that a period will then be reached when a considerable portion of humanity will have to drop out for the time from our scheme of evolution, simply because they have not yet developed themselves enough to be able to take advantage of the opportunities which will then be opening before mankind—because under the conditions then prevailing no incarnations of a sufficiently unadvanced type to suit them will be available.

Thus we shall come to a definite division—a kind of day of judgment upon which will take place the separation of the sheep from the goats, after which *these* shall pass on into æonian life, and *those* into æonian death—or at least into a condition of comparatively suspended evolution. "Æonian, we observe; that is, age-long, lasting throughout this age, or dispensa-

tion, or manvantara ; but not for a moment to be looked upon as eternal. Those who thus fall out of the current of progress for the time will take up the work again in the next chain of globes exactly where they had to leave it in this ; and though they lose such place as they have held in this evolution, yet it is only because the evolution has passed beyond them, and it would have been a mere waste of time for them to attempt to stay in it any longer.

It will be remembered that when a pupil has been so happy as to pass successfully through all the difficulties of the probationary period, and has taken that first initiation which is the gateway to the Path Proper, he is spoken of as the Sotâpanna — “ he who has entered upon the stream.” The meaning of this is that he as an individual has already passed the critical period to which we have referred ; he has already reached the point of spiritual development which nature requires as a passport to the later stages of the scheme of evolution of which we form a part. He has entered upon the stream of that evolution, now sweeping along its upward arc, and though he may still retard or accelerate his progress—may even, if he act foolishly, waste a very great deal of valuable time—he cannot again turn aside permanently from that stream, but is carried steadily along by it towards the goal appointed for humanity.

He is thus safe from the greatest of the dangers which menace mankind during this manvantara—the

danger of dropping out of the current of its evolution ; and so he is often spoken of as “ the saved ” or “ the elect.” It is in this sense, and in this sense only, that we can take the words of this first clause of the Athanasian Creed, “ Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic Faith.”

Nor need we let ourselves fall into the vulgar error as to the real meaning of this last statement. The word catholic means simply universal, and that faith which is truly universal is not the form into which truth is cast by any one of the great Teachers, but the truth itself which underlies all form — the Wisdom Religion, of which all the exoteric religions are only partial expressions. So that this clause, when properly understood, simply conveys to us the undeniable statement that for any man who wishes to carry out his evolution to its appointed end, the most important thing is rightly to understand the great occult teaching as to the origin of all things and the descent of spirit into matter.

It has been objected that this statement is inaccurate, and the objectors remark that surely the most important teaching to any man is that which educates him morally—which tells him not what he must believe but what he must *do*. Now of course that is quite true ; but such objectors ignore or forget the fact that the fullest moral development is always taken for granted in all religions before even the possibility of

attaining a true grasp of any sort of high occult knowledge is admitted. They also forget that it is only by this occult knowledge that either the commands or the sanctions of their moral code can be explained, or indeed that any reason can be shown for the very existence of a moral code at all.

In addition to all this it has to be clearly recognized that though morality is absolutely necessary as a prerequisite to real progress, it is by no means *all* that is required. Unintelligent goodness will save a man much pain and trouble in the course of his upward path, but it can never carry him beyond a certain point in it; there comes a period when in order to progress it is absolutely imperative that a man should *know*. And this is at once the explanation and the justification of the second verse of the Creed, around which such heated controversy has raged — “Which faith except every one do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly”—the last word being of course not taken in the unphilosophical and metaphysically impossible orthodox sense, but understood as before to signify æonially, as far as this age or manvantara is concerned.

There is no halo of special antiquity surrounding this particular form of words, for in the profession of Denebert, which is the oldest form we have of this earlier part of the Creed, they do not appear. It is probable that the original writer used them and that Denebert, misunderstanding them, omitted them; but

whether that is so or not, there is no need to be afraid of them or to attempt to explain away their obvious meaning; this clause is after all merely the converse of the last one, and simply states somewhat more emphatically that, since a grasp of certain great facts is most important and indeed necessary in order to pass the critical period, those who do not acquire that grasp will certainly fail to pass it. A serious statement, truly, and well worthy of our closest attention, but surely in no sense a dreadful one; for when a man has once got beyond the stage in which he "faintly trusts the larger hope" to that further stage where he knows that it is not a hope but a certainty—in other words, when he has for the first time discovered something of what evolution really means—he can never again feel that awful sense of helpless horror which was born of hopelessness.

Our author then very carefully proceeds to inform us what these great facts are whose comprehension (in so far as our very finite minds may at present comprehend them) is so essential to our hope of progress.

"And the Catholic faith is this, that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the persons, nor dividing the substance." Perhaps the great mystery of the Logos could hardly be better put into words for our physical understanding; we can scarcely better express the eternal Oneness which is yet ever threefold in Its aspect. And assuredly the final caution is most emphatically neces-

sary, for never will the student be able even to approach the comprehension of the origin of the solar system to which he belongs—never by consequence will he in the least understand the wonderful trinity of *âtma*, *buddhi*, *manas*, which is himself, unless he takes the most scrupulous care to keep clear in his mind the different functions of the Three Great Aspects of the One, while never for one moment running the risk of “dividing the substance” by losing sight of the eternal underlying Unity.

Most certainly “there is one person of the Father, another of the Son, and another of the Holy Ghost,” for *persona* is nothing in the world but a mask, an *aspect*; yet again beyond all shadow of doubt or question “the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost is all *one*—the glory equal, the majesty co-eternal,” since all are equally manifestations of the ineffable splendour of Him in whom our whole system lives and moves and has its being.

“Uncreate” indeed are each of these aspects as regards their own system, and differing thereby from every other force or power within its limits, since all these others are called into existence by them and in them; “incomprehensible” indeed, not only in the modern sense of “ununderstandable,” but in the much older one of “uncontainable,” since nothing on these far lower planes (which alone we know) can ever be more than the most partial and incomplete manifestation of their unshadowed glory; “eternal” certainly,

in that they all endure as long as their system endures, and probably through many thousands of systems; "and yet they are not three eternal, but one eternal; not three uncreated, nor three incomprehensibles, but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible," for that in them which is uncreated, incomprehensible and eternal is not the aspect, but ever the underlying Unity which is one with the All.

"For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every person by himself to be God and Lord" (that is, to recognize the almighty power of the Logos as working equally in each of these His aspects), "so are we forbidden by the Catholic religion to say there be three Gods or three Lords"—that is, to set up the three aspects in any sense against or apart from each other—to regard them in any way disproportionately, or as separate entities. How often these aspects of the Divine *have* been divided, and worshipped separately as gods or goddesses of wisdom, of love, or of power, and with what disastrous results of partial or one-sided development in their followers, the pages of history will reveal to us. Here, at any rate, the warning against such a fatal mistake is sufficiently emphatic.

Again in the Athanasian Creed we see evidence of the same careful endeavour to make clear as far as may be the difference of genesis of the three aspects of the Logos which we found so prominent in the wording of the Nicene Creed. "The Father is made

of none, neither created nor begotten; the Son is of the Father alone, not made, nor created, but begotten; the Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.”

We need not here go over again the ground already traversed in connection with the corresponding clauses in the Nicene Creed, further than to point out that in the words “the Son is of the Father alone,” we have once more an emphatic statement of the true meaning of the term usually so grossly mistranslated as “only-begotten.”

Yet again does our writer recur to the vast question of the equality of the three great aspects, for he continues, “And in this Trinity none is afore or after other, none is greater or less than another, but the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal.” It has been objected that philosophically this must be untrue, since that which had a beginning in time must have an end in time; that since the Son comes forth from the Father, and the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son, a time must come when these later manifestations, however glorious, must cease to be; that, in point of fact (to put the objection in the form so familiar fifteen hundred years ago), “Though great is the only-begotten, yet greater is he that begat.”

This suggestion seems at first sight to be countenanced by much that we read in Theosophical teachings as to what is to occur at that far-distant period in the

future which in our earlier literature was spoken of as the mahâpralaya, when all that exists shall once more be merged in the infinite—when even “the Son himself shall become subject to Him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all.” Of that great consummation of the ages it is obvious that in reality we know, and can know, nothing; yet if, remembering the well-known occult aphorism, “As above, so below,” we endeavour to lift our minds in its direction by the help of analogies in microcosmic history which are less hopelessly beyond our grasp, we are not without some evidence that even taken in this highest and sublimest sense the confident words of our Creed may still be justified, as we shall presently see.

But it is evident that this utterance, like all the rest of the document, is primarily to be interpreted as referring to our own solar system and those three aspects of its Logos which to us represent the Three Great Logoi; and assuredly they may be regarded as æonically eternal, for, so far as we know, they existed as separate aspects for countless ages before our system came into being, and will so exist for countless ages after it has passed away.

And after all he would be but a superficial thinker to whom it would be necessary to prove that as regards the work of the evolution of man, at any rate, “in this Trinity none is greater or less than another;” for though it is true that the spirit of man is directly the gift of the Father, since it comes to him in that third

outpouring which is of the essence of the First Logos, yet it is also true that no individual vehicle could ever have been evolved to receive that spirit without the long process of the descent into matter of the monadic essence, which is the outpouring of the Second Logos, the Son ; and assuredly that descent could never have taken place unless the way had been prepared for it by the wonderful vivifying action of the Third Logos, the Holy Ghost, upon the virgin matter of the cosmos, which alone made it possible that, for us men and for our salvation, He should become "incarnate of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary."

So that all three of the forms of action were equally necessary to the evolution of humanity, and thus it is that we are so clearly taught to recognize that among them "none is afore or after other," either in point of time or of importance, since all must equally be acting all the while in order that the intended result may be brought about ; thus it is that we are equally bound to all by ties of deepest gratitude, and that to us therefore it remains true that "the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal,"—the upper triad which forms the Individuality of the Solar Logos Himself.

I said that there seemed some evidence to show that, even in the highest and remotest sense, this glorious Trinity would remain co-eternal together. For undoubtedly the principles in man which correspond to its three persons are those which we have been in the habit of calling *âtâmâ*, *buddhi*, *manas*.

Whether those names were wisely chosen, whether their real meaning in the East is at all identical with that which we have learnt to attach to them, I am not concerned to discuss now. I am using them simply as they have always been used in our literature, to indicate certain well-known and distinguishable principles. And I say that, although we know nothing whatever (of our own knowledge) about the universal pralaya when all that is has been once more withdrawn into its central point, we *have* some small amount of direct evidence as to the corresponding process of withdrawal towards the centre in the case of the microcosm, man.

We know how after each incarnation a partial withdrawal takes place, and how, though each personality in turn seems entirely to disappear, the essence and outcome of all that is gained in each of them is not lost, but persists through the ages in a higher form. That higher form, the individuality, the reincarnating ego, seems to us the one thing really permanent amidst all the fleeting phantasmagoria of our lives; yet at a certain rather more advanced stage of our evolution our faith in its permanence *as we have known it* will receive a severe and sudden shock.

After a man has passed far enough upon his way to have raised his consciousness fully and definitely into that ego, so as to identify himself entirely with it, and not with any of the transient personalities upon whose long line he can then look back as mere days of his

higher life, he begins gradually but increasingly to obtain glimpses of the possibilities of a still subtler and more glorious vehicle—the buddhic body.

At last there comes a time when that body in turn is fully developed—when in full consciousness he is able to rise into it and use it as before he used his causal body. But when, in his enjoyment of such extended consciousness, he turns to look down from outside upon what has for so long been the highest expression of him, he is startled beyond measure to find that it has disappeared. This that he had thought of as the most permanent thing about him has vanished like a mist-wreath; he has not left it behind him to resume at will, as it has long been his custom to leave his mind-body, his astral body, and his physical encasement; it has simply to all appearance ceased to exist.

Yet he has lost nothing; he is still himself, still the same individuality, with all the powers and faculties and memories of that vanished body—and how much more! He soon realizes that though he may have transcended that particular aspect of himself, he has yet not lost it; for not only is its whole essence and reality still a part of himself, but the moment he descends in thought to its plane once more, it flashes into existence again as the expression of him upon that plane—not the same body technically, for the particles which composed the former one are dissipated beyond recall, yet one absolutely identical with it in every respect, but newly called into objective

existence simply by the turning of his attention in its direction.

Now to say that in such a man the *manas* was lost would indeed be a marvel of misrepresentation; it is in existence as definitely as ever, even though it has been spiritualized and raised to the buddhic plane. And when at a still later stage his consciousness transcends even the buddhic plane, can we doubt that all the powers both of buddhi and *manas* will still be at his command, even though an infinity be added to them?

Perhaps it may be somewhere along the line of thought which is thus suggested that it will be found possible to harmonize these apparently contradictory ideas—that all which exists must one day cease to be, and yet that “the whole three persons are co-eternal together and co-equal, so that in all things, as is afore-said, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.”

And so this first half of the Athanasian Creed ends as it began, with a clear straightforward statement which leaves nothing to be desired: “He therefore that will be saved must thus think of the Trinity.”

We then pass on, just as in the other Creeds, to a further elaboration of the doctrine of the descent of the Second Logos into matter, which is also declared to be a prerequisite for æonian progress: “Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he also believe rightly the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Then our writer proceeds carefully and methodically to define his position in this important matter: "For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and man; God, of the substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and man, of the substance of his mother, born in the world."

This part of the subject was so fully considered in the earlier part of this volume when dealing with the Nicæan symbol that it is hardly necessary to dwell much upon it here, since this is simply a fuller and more explicit form of the statement of the dual aspect of the Christ, showing how He, the alone-begotten, the first of all the æons or emanations from the Father, was absolutely of one substance with the Eternal and identical with Him in every respect, while yet in His later form He had just as truly and really taken upon Himself the vesture of this lower matter, and so was "incarnate of the Holy Ghost and the Virgin Mary," as has been previously explained. And in this latter form it is particularized that He had not existed "before the worlds" or ages began, but was "born in the world"—that is, that His descent into incarnation had taken place at a definite and comparatively recent period within this age or solar manvantara. The Latin word *sæculum* does not, of course, mean "world" at all, but "world-period" or "age."

As we know from the accounts which are called by courtesy the "history" of the Christian Church, there

had been those to whom this idea of duality had been a stumbling-block—who had deemed it impossible that conditions differing so widely and entirely could both be manifestations of the same great power; and so our Creed insists with emphasis upon the actual identity and indivisibility of the Christos. We are told that He is “perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting”—that is, consisting of the manas as well as of the lower principles; that He is “equal to the Father as touching His Godhead, yet inferior to the Father as touching His manhood”—equal to Him in every way, save only that He has descended this one step further, and in thus becoming manifest has for the time limited the full expression of that which yet He is in essence all the while.

Yet in all our consideration of this never must we for a moment lose sight of the underlying unity; “for although He be God and man, yet He is not two, but one Christ; one, not by the conversion of the Godhead into flesh, but by the taking of the manhood into God.” However deeply involved in matter the Christ-principle may become, it remains the Christ-principle still, just as the lower manas is ever fundamentally one with and an aspect of the higher, however wide apart from it it may sometimes seem when looked at from below; and the writer further makes clear to us that this is to be regarded as finally and absolutely proved not chiefly because its origin is one, as though the Godhead has been brought down to the human

level, but rather by the even more glorious fact that in the future they will once again become consciously one, when all the true essence of the lower and all the quality that it has developed from latency into action shall be borne back triumphantly into the higher, and thus shall be achieved the grandest conception that any doctrine has ever given us—the true and full at-one-ment, “the taking of the manhood into God.”

Fundamentally, essentially one are they, “one altogether, not by confusion” (that is, commingling or melting together) “of substance, but by unity of person”—a unity which has been a fact in nature all the time, if we could but have seen it—just as, once more, the lower and the higher manas are one, just as the physical body is one with the soul within it, because it is after all an expression and an aspect of it, however defective—“for as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.”

“Who suffered for our salvation, descended into hell, rose again the third day from the dead; he ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God almighty, from whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.” These clauses call for no special notice here, since they are simply a reproduction of those upon which we have already so fully commented in writing of the earlier Creeds, though we may just observe in passing that here we have no mention of the myths of Pontius Pilate and the crucifixion.

Indeed on the whole this, the longest and perhaps latest of the Creeds, is remarkably free from the corrupting influence of the tendency which we have called (c); the only really bad instance of it occurs in the next clauses, which are obviously a blundering reference to the critical period of the fifth round. "At whose coming all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works; and they that have done good shall go into life everlasting" (that is, as usual, æonian), "and they that have done evil into everlasting fire."

The writer is quite accurate in supposing that the judgment in the fifth round will be passed upon men when they rise again with their bodies—that is, when they reincarnate; but he is in error in associating this with the messianic myth of the return of a personal Christ. Again he is right in asserting that life for the rest of the æon awaits those who successfully pass the tests, but wrong in dooming those who fail to the crucible of the æonian fire—a fate reserved solely for those personalities which have been definitely severed from their egos.

These unhappy entities (if entities they may still be called) pass into the eighth sphere, and are there resolved into their constituent elements, which are then ready for the use of worthier egos in a future manvantara. This may not inaptly be described as falling into æonian fire; but more accurate knowledge would have shown the writer that this could happen

only to lost personalities—never to individualities; and that the fate of those who are rejected in the fifth round will be æonian delay only, and not æonian fire, since they will remain in a subjective but by no means unhappy condition until nature offers another opportunity of a kind by which they are capable of profiting.

Our Creed ends with a repetition of the statement with which it commenced: "This is the Catholic faith, which except a man believe faithfully he cannot be saved." The Trèves edition of the *Quicumque* gives us a much modified form of this verse; but, as we have said before, when we recognize definitely what it really means, we have no reason to shirk the most positive statement of what we see to be an important truth in nature.

And so we take our leave of these time-honoured formulæ of the Christian Church, hoping that such fragmentary exposition as it has here been possible to make of them may have at least this much result, that if it happens in the future to any of our readers to hear or to take part in their recitation they may bring to them a deeper interest and a fuller comprehension, and so derive from them a greater profit than ever before.

